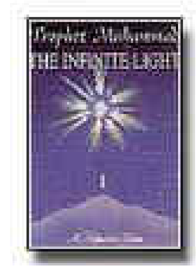


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PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I



Preface

THE INFINITE LIGHT I,II is a compilation of the sermons which F. Gülen gave every Friday of 1989 to introduce people, especially the young, to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, in all his aspects. In this book, you will meet the "Mercy for all the worlds" as Prophet, educator, statesman, commander, sociologist, economist, psychologist, moralist, teacher, orator, preacher, father, husband, and a humble, compassionate, brave, wise, gracious, gentle, and trustworthy member of humanity, and most sincere and beloved servant of God Also, you will find out how to follow his example, and learn the meaning and establishment of *Sunna and* its place in Islam.

The second volume of this book is now ready

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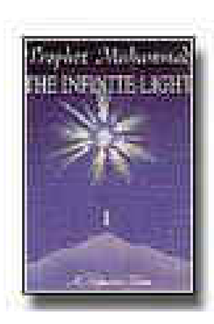
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PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I



THE INFINITE LIGHT is a compilation of the sermons which F. Gülen gave every Friday of 1989 to introduce people, especially the young, to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, in all his aspects. In this book, you will meet the "Mercy for all the worlds" as Prophet, educator, statesman, commander, sociologist, economist, psychologist, moralist, teacher, orator, preacher, father, husband, and a humble, compassionate, brave, wise, gracious, gentle, and trustworthy member of humanity, and most sincere and beloved servant of God Also, you will find out how to follow his example, and learn the meaning and establishment of *Sunna and* its place in Islam.

PREFACE

I would like to introduce the reader to the exemplary life of the blessed Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and his distinguished, exalted personality. The ‘water of life’ for the salvation of humankind should be made known to everyone.

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is the pride of humankind. For the past fourteen centuries, many thinkers, philosophers, scientists and scholars, each a radiant star in our intellectual world, have stood behind him in respect and admiration and taken pride in membership of his community.

It is enough to appreciate and understand his greatness that even after so many attacks, we still hear the words I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God from minarets five times a day. While his name is being proclaimed from minarets we rejoice, as do the dead and other spiritual beings. It is enough to establish his greatness that, in spite of the concerted efforts to corrupt our younger generation and lead them astray, the young in this century, although it is impossible for them to perceive the full reality of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, hasten to him as moths hasten to light.

Time has not been able to make us forget the truth about him. He is so fresh in my mind that if I mention his holy name, it is as if I am about to meet him a few steps later. Once, while on pilgrimage to his radiant city, Madina, I felt that he was about to appear and welcome us. As time progresses, some thoughts become obsolete, but Muhammad, upon him be peace, remains as fresh as a rosebud in the hearts of the Muslims. It is for this reason that as soon as his name is mentioned from the minaret, we immediately abandon our work and hasten to mosque in acceptance of his invitation.

Muhammad as a pure spring of true knowledge and spirituality

If we had been allowed to describe him as others have been described, if we had used the social and educational institutions, then, most probably, all the youth of today would be following his way. Despite our shortcomings, many pick up their 'glasses' and run to fill them from this 'pure spring'. In every part of the world, including the United States, England, France and Germany, an Islamic revival is being observed. The Muslims are sowing these lands with the seeds of a happy future. Islam in every corner of the world is healthy and is flourishing as it had done in the Time of Happiness, i.e. the time of Muhammad himself. The same is true of the predominantly Muslim lands. Muslims, who were unconsciously devoted to Islam without deep perception or research, have given way to a new generation who are consciously following Muhammad, upon him be peace, in the light of science and advances in knowledge. Those who were previously exploiting schools and universities on behalf of unbelief are now running to him. World famous men including Maurice Bucaille and Roger Garaudy, have seen the falsehood of their systems and are hastening to the school of Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, which is faultless.

Muhammad as the most beloved of hearts

I wonder whether we have fully recognized the most beloved of hearts. Even I, who have been performing five daily prayers since the age of five and striving to be a slave at his door, wonder if I am able to recognize him. Have we been able to enthuse love into the hearts of the men of this century by describing the ultimate source of all love and enthusiasm?

If only mankind had known Muhammad, they would have fallen in love with him as Majnun fell in love with Layla.1 Whenever his name is mentioned, they would tremble with joy in anticipation of entering the ethos which surrounds him and following his way wholeheartedly.

Man can love only one he knows and only to the extent of his knowledge. Our enemies have tried their utmost to make us forget and ensure that his holy name should not be mentioned anywhere. Since he is supported by God, all these obstacles have been torn down and the younger generation are submitting themselves to him as joyfully as one dying of thirst in the burning desert does when he finds water. His mighty tenderness and compassion will embrace every 'thirsty' person who comes to him.

You must have noticed that when you come to the Friday prayers, the congregation consists mainly of young people. Have you ever asked why, despite the misguidance and rebellion prevalent in most parts of the world, young people come to mosques and sit despite cold and other difficulties? There is only one attraction — Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. Whether we can grasp it or not, souls and hearts rush to him as moths to a candle. Even those 'winter flies' who have not been so fortunate will soon be turning to him. The whole world will soon be following him. Scientists and great thinkers will be studying him. Those who are currently enemies will soon be bosom friends and will take refuge in his warm welcome. In his time, even his enemies admired him.

He once related a dream that he had had. He, upon him be peace, said: *They weighed me against ten people of my community and I outweighed them. Then they weighed me against a hundred and then a thousand respectively and I outweighed them all*. He also related: *I was weighed against the whole of my community and I outweighed them*. He outweighs all the men of intellect, the men of piety and spirituality and the men of faith and knowledge. This is because all other beings were created because of him. It is reported that God said to him: *But for you, I would not have created the spheres.*

Muhammad as the describer of the meaning of creation

The universe is a book. If Muhammad, upon him be peace, had not been created, this book would not have been understood. To create a book that could not be understood would have been an effort in vain. God Almighty is beyond exerting Himself in vain. Therefore, He created Muhammad so that he may describe the meaning of creation. God was to be a teacher to him to whom the earth and the firmaments were subjected. The seeker of truth asks himself 'Who am I and where am I ?' 'For what purpose have I been created?' 'What is the destination of my journey?' 'Who is my guide through this journey?'

Muhammad is the one who provided creation with meaning and gave man the answers to such questions. If he had been fully recognized, he would have been truly loved. Although we only know him a little, we still love him.

Let me narrate to you an incident that occurred during a visit to Muhammad's holy city. The atmosphere was overpowering. Something occurred to me. Every morning, I pray to God saying seven times, O my God, save me from Hellfire and make me enter Paradise among the company of the godly people. There can be no believer who does not wish to enter Paradise. However, in this environment I asked myself: 'If they were to invite you to Paradise through any of its seven gates, which would you prefer – entering into the rawdah, the area in the mosque next to the Prophet's tomb, or entering Paradise?' Believe me, I swear by God that I said to myself: 'This place is more appealing to me. I have had the chance to rub my face against the soil of my master, at whose door I prefer to be a slave chained, than anything else in the world. I do not want to miss this chance.'

I believe this is the desire of every believer. When I was blessed with this great opportunity, I was with a member of the Turkish Parliament, Mr Arif Hikmet. He told me that he had promised himself that he would roll in the soil like a donkey when he stepped across the border and entered the land of Madina. This great man kept his promise. When I remember this incident, I can't prevent my eyes watering.

Muhammad's message embraces all men and jinn

Since the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, came with a Sacred Law that will never be abrogated and a Message which embraces all men and jinn, and

since he has hundreds of miracles excelling those of all other Prophets, he is the head of all the Prophets and therefore has the core of the miracles of all of them, as well as their unanimous confirmation. That is, the agreement of all the other Prophets on the same faith and the testimony of their miracles provide a support for Muhammad's honesty and truthfulness. He is, at the same time, the master and leader of all saints and men of purity and profound knowledge, who have attained perfection through his teaching and guidance and through the light of his Sacred Law. Thus, he has also the core of their wonders, their unanimous affirmation and the strength of all their verified conclusions. Since the way they have followed to reach the truth was the one opened and left open by him, all the wonders they have worked, all the conclusions they have established through meticulous research and intuition, and their consensus on the same faith, constitute another support for his Prophethood, for his truthfulness. It is because of this that the coming of Muhammad, the perfect Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, was promised by all the Prophets before him. God made a covenant with them that they would believe in him and support him.

Muhammad's coming was promised by all the previous Prophets

> God took a covenant with the Prophets: That I have given you of Book and Wisdom; then there shall come to you a Messenger confirming what is with you – you shall believe in him and you shall help him. He said: 'Will you affirm this, and take My load on you in this matter?' They answered: 'We affirm it.' He said: 'Bear witness so, and I shall be with you among the witnesses.' (Al 'Imran, 3.81)

All the Prophets led their lives in perfect loyalty to their promise. When the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, was about to make his *mi'raj*, Ascension, he led the prayers before the souls of all the other Prophets. All of them, including Abraham, Moses, Noah and Jesus, displayed their desire to become his *muezzin*, caller to prayer.

Jesus repeatedly gave his disciples the glad tidings of the coming of Muhammad. According to the *Gospel of John* (14. 16, 26, 30; 16.7), he said: 'It is better for you that I go away, because if I do not go, the helper will not come. I have much more to tell you, but for now it would be too much for you to bear. When, however, the spirit of the Truth, the lord of the world, who reveals the truth about God comes, he will lead you to the truth'.

Do we know Muhammad in all the aspects of his personality?

I wonder if we realize how unique he was as the head of family. Do we know how he brought up his children or grandchildren, each of whom would have been a great leader if he had come in succeeding centuries? He dealt with his wives so successfully that there was no disagreement between them. He was beyond all comparison as father, husband or simply as a human being.

He had such sublime virtues in his blessed being, such exalted qualities in his Messengership and such precious merits in the religion and Sacred Law that he preached, that even his most fanatical enemies could not help but admit them. Since this being combines in his personality, function and religion the most praiseworthy virtues, he is certainly the embodiment, the master and the representative of all the perfections and the high, laudable virtues found in the whole creation.

He was so perfect a commander that he challenged the whole world with only a handful of men. He repelled all who opposed his teachings. He experienced no defeat at all. He did that without being taught by any mortal or attending any military academy.

He was so informed about science that he told his followers about almost all the major events which would occur until the Last Day. It was as if he were watching a television screen or reading from an unseen tablet.

Where the realm of science has just reached is where the realm of Muhammad begins

Some time ago, a friend brought me a video cassette in which a Canadian paediatrician, Keith Moore, who had realized how the Qur'an describes the development of the human embryo in the mother's womb, declared his conversion to Islam pronouncing, *I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and I also bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger*. On the same tape a Japanese psychologist, who had discovered that Islam clears many of the problems that have baffled modern scientists, was trying to get his tongue around the Arabic words to make the same declaration.

Who taught all these scientific facts to Muhammad? Certainly, he did not speak on his own, but whatever he spoke was a Revelation revealed to him. He was taught by the One who knows everything, the One who is All-Knowing and All-Aware, so that, as science advances, humankind will come to discover a new aspect of his personality and will be filled with regret at not knowing him before that.

His Companions knew Muhammad and accordingly loved him very much

His Companions knew him and accordingly loved him very much. Their love for him was greater than their love for themselves. They were prepared to sacrifice their lives to protect him.

He dispatched a group of teachers to the tribe of Hudayl at their request. The Hudayli unbelievers betrayed their teachers and killed most of them. Zayd ibn Dasina and Hubayb were handed to the Quraysh, then enemies of the Muslims. They were about to be executed when, while on the gallows, Hubayb was asked: 'Do you wish that Muhammad were in your place so that you could be with your family in Madina?' Hubayb was startled. 'I would rather be cut into pieces than wish Muhammad, upon

him be peace and blessings, were in my place. I do not wish for even a thorn to hurt his blessed foot in exchange for my being returned to my family.‘ Then Hubayb prayed that God would convey his wish of peace and greetings to His Messenger, and inform him that he had remained loyal to him until he died. Meanwhile, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, informed his Companions of Hubayb‘s martyrdom and returned his greetings.

Sumayra, from the tribe of Dinar, hurried to the battlefield when the news reached her that the Muslims experienced a reverse in Uhud. They showed her the dead body of her father, but she ignored it. They showed the dead bodies of her husband and sons but she did not look at them. She just kept asking what had happened to the Prophet. Eventually somebody guided her to the Prophet. She threw herself to the ground a few metres away from his feet and said: ‘All misfortunes mean next to nothing to me, provided that you are alive, O Messenger of God!’

He was so loved that his Companions would have given their lives if it meant that he could live forever. But, of course, he was mortal like other created beings. The appointed hour drew near and he had to say farewell to his friends with whom he had been for twenty-three years. Mu‘adh ibn Jabal had been shuttling between Madina and the Yemen carrying the Prophet‘s Message. On the day he was about to leave, the Messenger of God said to him: O Muadh, leave now for the Yemen, but when you come back, you will probably visit my mosque and my tomb. These words were enough to bring Mu‘adh to the point of emotional collapse.

The problems of the age can be solved only by following the way of Muhammad

The problems of the twentieth century will be solved by following the way of Muhammad, upon him be peace. This has been acknowledged by unbiased Western and Eastern intellectuals. As Bernard Shaw admitted earlier this century, mankind, in order to solve their accumulated problems, need nothing more than the Prophet Muhammad, who solved the most complicated problems as easily as one drinks coffee.

Humankind is waiting for the return of the Muhammadan spirit. They are waiting for the Message of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. When they turn to him to solve their problems, they will be saved from being exploited, freed from all kinds of miseries, and they will attain true peace and happiness. This second revival has already begun despite the aversion of unbelievers.

> They desire to extinguish the light of God with their mouths; but God will perfect His light, even though unbelievers are averse. It is He Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may uplift it above every religion, even though the polytheists are averse. (al-Saf, 61.8-9)

God will uplift His religion, and people will run to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and in him will find peace and happiness. Humankind will learn to live in security through him and it will be as if they had entered Paradise while still in this world. This will take place despite the unbelievers and wrongdoers of Europe, the hypocrites of Asia and those living heedless of him. The lord of the Prophets, whose name we proclaim from our minarets five times a day to the whole world, will sooner or later be entrusted in the hearts of humankind. And, since the Prophet Muhammad was a man of peace, mankind will attain happiness through the Message that he brought.

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PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT II

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Chapter nine - The Prophet Muhammad as universal leader

Chapter ten - Other dimensions of Muhammad’s Prophethood

Chapter eleven - The Sunna of the Prophet and its place in Islamic legislation

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE DARK PERIOD OF *JAHILIYYA*

Every period of human history during which people associate partners with God in any way – whether by worshipping idols and ascribing to them some divine functions or by deifying some persons or attributing creativity to nature and material causes – is wholly dark. This is so because when belief in the Unity of God is removed from the heart, the mind and soul 'darken', all standards change and things and the world are judged from false points of view. This moral, spiritual, social and even economic and scientific state of a community is defined by the Qur'an as jahiliyyah, and described as follows:

> *Or like darkness on a deep sea obscure, covered by a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layers of darkness one upon the other. When he holds out his hand, wellnigh he cannot see it. And he for whom God has assigned no light, for him there is no light. (al-Nur, 24.40)*

What is there, after truth, but misguidance?

I do not like describing falsehood. Besides, it is wrong for me to describe falsehood where the truth may be described. In the words of God, *What is there, after truth, but misguidance*? (*Yunus*,10.32). However, in order to clarify the subject, I feel it necessary to say a few words concerning the pre-Islamic era, that is, the age of jahiliyyah.

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, appeared at a time when people had no knowledge of the true religion and therefore worshipped a great number of idols. As stated in the Qur'an:

> *They were serving, apart from God, what hurts them not, neither profits them, and they say: These are our intercessors with God. (Yunus, 10.18)*

They shaped idols of stones, earth, bread, even cheese, and then said: 'These are our intercessors with God.' They were so degraded in thoughts and morals that, as reported by Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, they would sit at meal-time, cut their idols into pieces and eat them. The only excuse offered was that they were following in the steps of their forefathers.

> *When it is said to them, 'Follow what God has sent down', they say, 'No; but we follow that wherein we found our fathers.' (al-Baqara, 2.170)*

They buried their daughters alive. In the words of the holy Qur'an:

> *When any of them is given the good tidings of a girl, his face is darkened and he chokes inwardly, as he hides himself from the people because of the evil of the good tidings that have been given to him, whether he shall preserve her in humiliation, or trample her into the dust. (al-Nahl, 16.58–9)*

Women were despised, not only in pre-Islamic Arabia but also in the Roman and Sassanid lands. The Qur'an openly declares that they will be questioned concerning this:

> *When the female (infant) buried alive is questioned – for what crime was she killed? (al-Takwir, 81.8-9)*

One day, after Muhammad's declaration of his Prophethood, one of his Companions came to him and narrated what he had done with his little daughter:

O Messenger of God, I had a daughter. One day I told her mother to dress her as I was taking her to her uncle – the poor mother knew what this meant, but she could do nothing but obey and weep. My wife dressed the infant, who was rejoicing at the news of going to the uncle. I took her near a well, and told her to look down into the well. While she was looking into the well, I kicked her into it. While she was rolling down, she was shouting 'Dad, Dad!'

As he was recounting this, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, sobbed as if he had lost one of his nearest kinsfolk.

Hearts had become hard. Every day a pit was dug in the corner of the desert for an innocent girl to be buried. Human beings were more brutal and cruel than hyenas. The powerful crushed the weak. It was a time when brutality was taken for humanity, cruelty received approval, the bloodthirsty were exalted, bloodshed considered a virtue, adultery and fornication were more common than legal marriages. Family structure had been destroyed.

This dark period would be followed by Islam, and, besides eradicating all other evils, God would also declare in the Qur'an concerning infanticide:

> *Do not slay your children because of the fear of poverty: We provide you and them. (al-An'am, 6.151)*

A GLIMPSE OF THE PROPHET'S LIFE BEFORE HIS PROPHETHOOD

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was, from his birth, brought up in the sight and under the care of God. He was deprived of his father while still in his mother's womb. He had to put all his trust in God and completely submit himself to Him. He visited his father's tomb in Madina years later, cried his heart out, and on his return, said: *I wept for my father and entreated God to forgive him*.

With the death of his father, God deprived him of all human support and directed him to the realization that there is no deity but God; He has no partners whatsoever.

He had to put all his trust in God. He was able to enjoy the protection of his grandfather and uncle to some extent, but he came to perceive that his real guardian was God. Behind every phenomenon and every cause and effect, he could discern the 'hand' of the Single Creator of the universe and of 'causes'. The Oneness of God would be manifested to him in the light of Divine Unity.

Muhammad grew up as an orphan

As a result of his father's death, he was to be called the 'Matchless Orphan Pearl'. In reference to this, God addressed him years later:

> Your Lord shall give you, and you shall be satisfied. Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you?... Did He not find you needy and suffice you? As for the orphan, do not oppress him, and as for the beggar, scold him not. (*al-Duha'*, 93.5-6, 8-10)

The Matchless Orphan Pearl not only lost his father, he lost also his mother, Amina, at an early age. When she died in the village of Abwa at age 25 or 26 on her way back from visiting her husband's tomb in Madina, Muhammad was only six years old. Thus, he learned the pain of being left without father and mother. Indeed, there would be nothing he would not learn and no suffering he would not have to bear, since he was sent to teach everything to mankind and to be an example in every respect.

When Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, lost his parents, his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, a respected elder of Makka, protected him. For this reason, God saved 'Abd al- Muttalib from all forms of misfortune. He embraced his beloved grandson, and always offered him the seat of honour in his house. He felt that his grandson would grow up to save humankind. Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was so noble and well-mannered that his grandfather anticipated his Prophethood. He was not the first of his noble forefathers to do so. Ka'b ibn Luayy, who is thought by some to also be a Prophet, had predicted that the Last Messenger would be raised up from his own progeny. He mentioned him by name:

Suddenly the Prophet Muhammad will appear;

He will give tidings and is truthful in his tidings.

The honourable grandfather of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, whom even the great army of Abraha could not bring to tears, wept bitterly when he took to his deathbed. His son, Abu Talib, came to him and asked why he was weeping. The answer came: 'I am weeping because I will no longer be able to embrace Muhammad'. He added: 'I am afraid something might happen to my Matchless Pearl. I entrust him to you for safekeeping.'

Abu Talib assumed Muhammad's protection and, in return, his son, 'Ali, would be blessed with being the father of the Prophet Muhammad's progeny. After Prophethood, the Messenger of God said to 'Ali, may God be pleased with him: The progeny of every other Prophet descended from himself, but my progeny is to be descended from you. 'Ali would

be the father and the greatest of all saints to come until the Last Day as the representatives of the Prophet's sainthood. This is the reward given to Abu Talib for helping Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

Muhammad's travels during his youth

Abu Talib protected Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, with utmost care. As related by historians and biographers such as Ibn Ishaq, Abu Talib took his nephew to Syria in a trade caravan, when he was ten or twelve years old.They stopped somewhere near Damascus and left him, as he was the youngest among them, to watch over the caravan. The caravan was being carefully observed by a monk from his nearby monastery, one who had been expecting the arrival of the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.The monk, named Bahira, had seen a cloud following the caravan, stopping when the caravan stopped, starting when the caravan started to shade one amongst them. 'This is a special characteristic of Prophets. The expected Prophet must be in that caravan,' he thought.

When the caravan stopped near his monastery, Bahira sent for the tradesmen and invited them for a meal. He noticed the cloud was still hovering over the caravan. Bahira asked Abu Talib if someone was left behind. Abu Talib answered that there was only a young boy, whom they had left to watch over their things. The monk asked them to fetch him. When Muhammad came, Bahira took Abu Talib to one side and asked him about his relationship with the boy. 'He is my son,' Abu Talib answered, but Bahira disputed this, saying: 'He cannot be your son. According to our books, his father must have died before his birth.' Then he added: 'Let me give you this advice. Take this boy back immediately. The Jews are envious. If they recognize him, they will harm him.' Abu Talib made an excuse to the other members of the caravan and returned to Makka with his nephew.

Muhammad was deeply averse to injustices

Another major event in the early life of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was the *Fijar* or Sacrilegious war which took place during his later teens. The Fijar war which he witnessed was the fourth one during which the sanctity of the sacred months (*Dhu'l-Qa'dah, Dhu'l-Hijjah, Muharram, Rajab*) and the sacred territory of Makka was violated. The cause of the war, which took place between the Quraysh and their confederates of *Banu Kinanah* on the one side and the *Hawazin* on the other, was quite trivial: a spirit of jealousy and animosity was ignited between two men, (one belonging to the *Kinanah* and the other to the *Qays-'Aylan* (an important clan of the *Hawazin*). The future Prophet, who was to come to put an end to all kinds of injustice and lawlessness, only helped his uncle Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, who represented *Banu Hashim* in the war, gather up the arrows discharged by the enemy.

Another important event worthy of mention with respect to the future Prophet's youth is that he was present in the meeting which resulted in the formation of *Hilf al-Fudul* (the alliance of the virtuous). *Hilf al-Fudul* was a kind of league against injustice. It was sponsored mainly by Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttalib. The immediate reason for forming this alliance was an injustice suffered by a merchant from the Yemen. The Qurayshite 'As ibn Wa'il had usurped his goods. The Yemeni in vain sought the help of the Qurayshite leaders. When *Banu Hashim*, the clan of the Prophet, heard this, they called a meeting which resulted in the formation of Hilf al-Fudul, and of course the return of the money to the Yemeni merchant. An oath was taken by the members of this assembly that whenever they found someone in Makka whether he be a citizen of it or a stranger visiting it to whom injustice had been done, they would stand by him against his oppressor until the wrong had been redressed. Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was so impressed by its noble objectives that he would say long after: I attended at the house of 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'an the conclusion of an agreement which I would not exchange for the best of material gains, and if someone appeals to it in Islam I would respond.

Muhammad's childhood and youth were a prelude to his Prophethood

Muhammad's childhood and youth were a prelude to his Prophethood. Besides his other exalted, laudable characteristics, everyone agreed upon his truthfulness and trustworthiness. He never lied, never cheated and never broke his word. He did not participate in *jahiliyyah*, even for a second. He was called 'the Truthful, Trustworthy Man'

even by his bitterest enemies.

People would say of him: ‘If you go on a journey and need someone to whose safeguarding you will entrust your wife, you can entrust her to Muhammad without hesitation. He will not take even a momentary glance at her face. If you want to entrust your wealth for safeguarding, entrust it to this trustworthy, honest man. He will never touch it. If you look for someone who never tells a lie and never breaks his word, go directly to Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, because whatever he says is true.’

Those who knew him from his childhood immediately believed in him when he declared his Prophethood. Among them were Abu Bakr, ‘Uthman, Talha, Zubayr, Abu Dharr, and Yasir. When ‘Ammar told his father, Yasir, that he believed in Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, the latter responded to him, saying: ‘If Muhammad says that God is One, it is true. He never lies.’

In the early days of his Prophethood, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, once summoned the people of the Quraysh to gather at the foot of the hill of Abu Qubays and asked them: Would you believe me if I told you an enemy host was waiting behind this hill to attack you? ‘Yes, we would believe you,’ all of them answered, including even his red-haired uncle, Abu Lahab, his most bitter and inflamed enemy.

The sun of guidance about to rise

When mankind were in dire need of someone to destroy the order of unbelief and breathe a new life into the world, God raised Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, to stop all forms of wickedness. In the words of Ahmad Shawky:

The sun of guidance was born
and the entire universe was illumined.
A smile appeared on the lips of time
and his praises were sung.

When he appeared on the horizon of Madina years later, the pure, innocent children of that illumined city would sing his praises as follows:

The ‘full moon’ rose upon us from the hills of Wada’,
So it is incumbent upon us to thank God so long as
Those who pray and entreat Him continue to do so.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE PROPHET AS MENTIONED IN THE TORAH AND PSALMS

One of his Companions once asked God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, to talk about himself. The Messenger remarked in his answer: *I am the one for whose coming Abraham prayed and of whom Jesus gave glad tidings*.

This is an allusion to the following Qur'anic verses:

> *(Abraham prayed): 'Our Lord, raise up in their midst a Messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Your signs, and teach them the Book and Wisdom, and purify them. Verily you are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.' (al-Baqara, 2.129)*
>
> *When Jesus, son of Mary, said: 'O children of Israel! I am indeed a Messenger of God to you, confirming that which was [revealed] before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name is Ahmad [the Praised One].' (al-Saff, 61.6)*

The Messenger of God did not appear unexpectedly. All the preceding Prophets had told about him and predicted him. It is stated explicitly in the Qur'an (Al 'Imran, 3:81) that God made a covenant with the Prophets that they would believe in and help the Messenger who would come after them confirming the Message that they brought.

Although subjected to many distortions and alterations, the current versions of the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms still contain verses alluding, implicitly or explicitly, to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. The late Husayn Jisri found one hundred and fourteen such allusions and quoted them in his Risalah al-Hamidiyah. We shall cite here a few examples:

> *The Lord came from Sinai and dawned over them from Sair; He shone forth from Mount Paran(Deuteronomy, 33.2)*

This verse refers to the Prophethood of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, upon all of them be peace. Sinai is the place where the Prophet Moses spoke to God and received the Torah. Sair, a place in Palestine, is where the Prophet Jesus received Divine Revelation. Paran is where God manifested Himself to mankind for the last time through His Revelation to our Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

Paran is a mountain range in Makka. It is mentioned in the Torah (*Genesis*, 21:19–21) as the area in the desert where Hagar was left by her husband Abraham, upon him be peace, to live with her son, Ishmael. The well of *Zamzam* appeared in it. As it is known and stated explicitly in the Qur'an (*Ibrahim*, 14.35–7), Abraham left Hagar and Ishmael in the valley of Makka, which was then an uninhabited place between the mountain ranges of Paran.

It is because of the explicit predictions of the Torah that its followers were expecting the Last Prophet and knew that he would appear in Makka.

The verse of *Deuteronomy*, according to the Arabic version published in London in 1944, continues:

> *He came with myriads of holy ones; in his right hand was an axe of fire with two edges.*

This verse refers to the promised Prophet who would have numerous Companions of the highest degree of sainthood and be allowed, and even ordered, to fight against his enemies.

The following verses of the Torah also promise the coming of Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings:

> *The Lord said to me [Moses]: 'What they say is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in my name, I will myself call him to account.' (Deuteronomy, 18:17–9)*

It is clear from these verses that what is meant by 'a Prophet like you among their brothers' is a Prophet who will come from the line of Ishmael, since Ishmael is the brother of Isaac, who is the forefather of the Children of Israel. The only Prophet who came after Moses and resembled him in many ways, for example, in the bringing of a new law and the waging of war on his enemies, is the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. The Qur'an points to the same fact:

> *We have sent to you a Messenger as a witness over you, even as we sent to Pharaoh a Messenger. (al-Muzzammil, 73.15)*

'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr, one of the ascetics of his time, who was warned by the Prophet not to neglect sleeping with his wife, and not to fast every day but rather on alternate days, is reported to have said:

It was common knowledge to the communities of previous religions that God would send a Prophet to the whole of humankind as a bearer of good tidings and a warner. I had personally read in the Torah these verses about him:

> *'We have sent you, O Prophet, to the whole of mankind as a bearer of good tidings and a warner; and as a support and refuge for the common folk. You are my servant and Messenger. I have called you Mutawakkil [the one who puts his trust in God]. He is not one rude, repelling and angry, and shouting in the streets. He does not repel evil with evil; instead, he excuses and forgives. God will not make him die before He guides through him the deviating nation to the right path by declaring there is no deity but God.'*

This report of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr was confirmed by 'Abd Allah ibn Salam and Ka'b al-Akhbar, who were the most learned scholars of the Jewish community at the time of the Prophet and who later converted to Islam.

We also read about the Seal of the Prophets, upon him be peace and blessings, in the Psalms of David:

> *He will rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. The desert tribes will bow before him and his enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarsish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the Kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts. All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him. For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no-one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.*

Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given to him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long. Let corn abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. May his name endure for ever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed. (*Psalms*, Chapter 72.8–17)

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PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE PROPHET AS MENTIONED IN THE GOSPELS

More emphatically and more frequently than any other Prophet, the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, gave the good tidings of the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus promises the arrival of the Last Prophet using a variety of names:

> *But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the 'Paraklit' will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement. (John, 16:7-8)*

In these verses, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is referred to as the Paraklit. Paraklit is a Greek word meaning the Distinguisher between Truth and Falsehood. Although Christian interpreters have given this word different meanings such as Counsellor (*Gideons International*) or Helper (*American Bible Society*) or Comforter (*the Company of the Holy Bible*), and claimed that it refers to the Holy Spirit, it is impossible even for Christians to establish whether the Holy Spirit has come down after Jesus and done what Jesus foretold he would do.

If, according to Christians, the Holy Spirit is the Archangel Gabriel, he came many times to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, to bring Divine Revelations. Further, Jesus mentioned and predicted the Paraklit with other different names, but the same function, as is seen in the following verses:

> *When Paraklit comes – the Spirit of truth – who comes from the Father, he will testify about me. (John, 15.26)*

> *I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you. (John, 16.12-14)*

> *I will not speak with you much longer, for the Prince of this world is coming. And I posses nothing of him. (John, 14.30)*

Who has come after Jesus other than the Prophet Muhammad, as the Comforter who has comforted human beings against fear of death, against worries about the future, against spiritual ailments of all kinds? As the Helper, who has helped mankind to attain real peace and happiness in both worlds? As the Prince of the world, who has ruled almost half of the world for fourteen centuries, and who has become the beloved of billions? And as the Spirit of truth who testified to Jesus, brought glory to him by declaring his Prophethood against the denial of the Jews and false deification of him by Christians, and restoring his religion to its pristine purity through the Book he brought? What shortcomings do the Western Christians attribute to the Prophet Muhammad, in contrast to Jesus and other Prophets, that, while almost all of the Christians of the 'Middle East' believed in him and converted to Islam within a few decades of his death, they persist in their denial of him and offer no justification?

Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, a great Sufi saint, expresses in the following stanza the good tidings of the Prophet Muhammad by the Gospel:

> *In the Gospel Mustafa is mentioned with his attributes, in him is the mystery of all the Prophets; he is the bringer of happiness. The Gospel mentions him with his external form and features, and also with his personal virtues and Prophetic qualities.*

In spite of all the distortions they have been subjected to over time, the Old and New Testaments still contain

references to the Prophet Muhammad, only some of which we have quoted. If, one day, the least corrupted copies of the Torah and the Gospel are discovered, it will be seen that they contain explicit references to the last Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings. This may be deduced from the Traditions which predict that Christianity will be purified of the borrowed, mostly pagan, elements imported into it.

MANY OTHERS AWAITED THE PROPHET

Owing to the numerous predictions of his coming, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was awaited by all of humankind. In that dark era of human history, the whole of creation was waiting for one who would destroy the order of unbelief and breathe new life into the world. Judaism and Christianity, being God-revealed religions in origin, had no more to offer mankind. Everyone was expecting him, especially those who had studied the old books without prejudice. Among them was Bahira, whose story we mentioned in the previous chapter. In Makka itself, there were many in expectation of him. Zayd ibn ‘Amr, the uncle of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, was one of the foremost among them. He had rejected the worship of idols, was leading a pure life and used to address people in this way:

There is no good in the idols you worship. I know of a religion which will soon be taught and spread. It will be proclaimed no later than a few years from now, but I do not know whether I will live long enough to witness it.

The same Zayd, according to ‘Amr ibn Rabi‘a, gave a detailed description of the expected Prophet:

I am expecting a Prophet, who is about to come. He will appear among the descendants of Ishmael and the grandsons of ‘Abd al-Muttalib. He is of middle height, neither too tall nor too short. His hair is neither curly nor straight. His name is Ahmad. His birthplace is Makka. However, his people will force him to leave Makka, and he will emigrate to Yathrib (Madina), where his religion will spread. I have travelled from place to place in quest of the religion of Abraham. However, all the Jewish and Christian scholars I spoke to advised me to wait for him. He is the Last Prophet; no Prophet will come after him. I may not live long enough to see him, but I have believed in him.

At the end of his introduction of the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, Zayd made this request to ‘Amr ibn Rabi‘a: ‘If you live long enough to see him, say my greetings to him.’

Years passed before the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, declared his Prophethood and ‘Amr ibn Rabi‘a, after having declared his faith to the Prophet, explained what Zayd had told him, and conveyed his greetings to him. Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, returned his greetings and added: *I saw Zayd in Paradise, trailing his robes*.

The story of a Christian and a Jewish scholar

Among the people who lived the inward anguish of seeking the truth was Waraqa ibn Nawfal. He was a Christian scholar and a paternal cousin of Khadija, wife of Muhammad, upon him be peace. When the first Revelation came to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, Khadija went to Waraqa and told him what had happened. Waraqa replied: ‘Muhammad is a truthful man. What he saw is that which occurs at the beginning of Prophethood. The being who came to him is Gabriel, who also came to Moses and Jesus. Muhammad will be a Prophet. If I live long enough to witness his declaration of Prophethood, certainly I will believe in him and support him.’

One of those seeking the Last Prophet was ‘Abd Allah ibn Salam. The Jews had great confidence in this scholar, whom they called ‘the lord, son of a lord’. Such was his greatness that he could match even the greatest companions like Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, and God would consider his testimony to the Qur’an as equal to the testimony of a people in the verse:

> *Say: ‘Have you considered? If it be from God, and you unbelieve in it, and a witness from among the Children of Israel bears witness to its like, and believes, and you wax proud, God guides not the people of the evildoers.’ (al-Ahqaf, 46.10)*

This great Companion describes how he found him:

"One with such a face cannot lie"

When God's Messenger emigrated to Madina, I went to see him, as did everyone else. He was sitting amidst a group of people when I went in, and saying: *Give food to others and offer them a greeting*! His speech was so sweet and his face so charming that I said to myself: 'I swear by God that one with such a face cannot lie'. Without delay I declared my belief in him.

All the Jews and Christians of that time recognized God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. As stated in the Qur'an, *They recognize him as they recognize their sons* (*al-Baqarah*, 2.146). After his conversion, 'Umar asked 'Abd Allah ibn Salam if he had recognized God's Messenger. 'I recognized him', Ibn Salam answered and added, 'I may doubt my children – my wife might have deceived me; but I have no doubt about God's Messenger being the Last Prophet.'

Although the Jews and Christians recognized him, most were envious of him and, because of their prejudice and envy, were left deprived of belief.

> *When there came to them a Book from God confirming what was with them – and they aforetime prayed for victory over the unbelievers – when there came to them what they recognized, they unbelieved in it; and the curse of God is on the unbelievers. (al-Baqarah, 2.89)*

The reaction of Jewish scholars

After his conversion, 'Abd Allah ibn Salam said to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings: 'O Messenger of God, hide me in a corner and then summon all the Jewish scholars in Madina to ask about me and my father. Their assessment will certainly be positive. Then let me come out to declare my conversion.'

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, accepted this suggestion. Ibn Salam hid in a corner and, when the Jewish scholars gathered, God's Messenger asked them what they thought of Ibn Salam and his father. All of them answered unanimously: 'Ibn Salam and his father are among the noblest and most learned of us.' Upon this, God's Messenger asked again: 'How will you react if he affirms me?' They responded: 'It is impossible that he will affirm you!' Ibn Salam came out at this point and declared his conversion, whereupon the Jewish scholars immediately changed their attitude and retorted: 'Ibn Salam is the most wicked among us and the son of the most wicked.'

The story of Salman al-Farisi

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was one who had been sought for centuries. Salman al-Farisi was one of those seekers. Originally he was a Magian, a fire worshipper. However, he was inwardly burning to find the eternal truth, and left home. Before embracing Islam, he had worked for several Christian monks, the last of whom advised Salman on his deathbed:

Son, there is nobody left to whom I can commend you. But according to what we read in our books, the Last Prophet is about to appear. He will come with the pure creed of Abraham and will appear in the place to which Abraham migrated. Nevertheless, he will emigrate to another place and settle there. There are explicit signs of his Prophethood. For example, he will not eat of charity, but will accept gifts, and the seal of Prophethood will be between his two shoulders.

Now, let us leave it to Salman himself to narrate the rest of his story:

I joined a caravan heading for the place that the late monk had mentioned. When we arrived at Wadi al-Qura', they

sold me to a Jew as a slave. When I saw gardens of date palms, I thought that that place would be where the Prophet would emigrate. While I was working there, another Jew from Banu Qurayza bought me and took me to Madina. I began working in the Jew's date palm garden. There was no news yet of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. However, one day I happened to be harvesting dates in a tree when a cousin of my Jewish owner came up hurriedly. He said to the Jew in anger: 'Damn it all! All the people are flocking to Quba. A man from Makka, who claims Prophethood, has come, and they imagine him to be a real Prophet.'

I began to tremble with excitement. I climbed down from the tree and asked the man: 'What are you talking about?' My owner saw my excitement and slapped me on the face with the back of his hand, saying: 'It does not concern you, mind your own business!'

On the same day, as the sun set, I went to him in Quba and presented to him as alms the food that I had brought with me. God's Messenger did not himself touch it, but said to those around him, 'Help yourself to this'. 'This is the first sign,' I told myself.

On another occasion, I presented something, but this time as a gift. He accepted it and ate it with his Companions. 'This is the second sign,' I told myself.

Once, after one of his Companions passed away, I attended the funeral, and I came close to God's Messenger in the cemetery. After greeting him, I stood behind him in the hope of seeing the seal of Prophethood. His shoulders were bare. The seal was just as the monk had described it. I couldn't help kissing it in tears and I told him my story. He was very pleased and wanted also his Companions to hear my story.

Those who sincerely sought him, found him

Those who sincerely sought him, found him; and whoever seeks him sincerely will certainly find him. But those who have not been able to give up obstinacy and escape the temptations of the evil-commanding self, have drowned in unbelief and hypocrisy. Mughira ibn Shu'ba narrates:

One day I was with Abu Jahl in Makka. God's Messenger came near us and invited us to accept Islam. Abu Jahl rebuked him, saying: 'If you are making this invitation so that we should testify before God in the other world that you performed your mission of Prophethood, we will do it. Leave us then, O man, to ourselves!'

The reason behind rejection

When God's Messenger left us, I asked Abu Jahl whether he did not truly admit the Prophethood of Muhammad. 'I admit it,' replied Abu Jahl and then added: 'I know that he is truly a Prophet. Nevertheless, we have so far competed with the Hashimites in everything. They have been boasting of providing food and water to the pilgrims. Now, if they begin to boast of having a Prophet, I will not be able to endure it at all. '

This is typical of the thoughts cherished by the Abu Jahls of the past and the present. Free-thinking persons who are not prejudiced and whose will-power is not paralyzed cannot help but believe in Islam and God's Messenger. In this respect, God says to His holy Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings:

> *We know well that their talk grieves you; in truth they deny not you, but it is the signs of God that the evildoers condemn. (al-An'am, 6.33)*

He was known by everybody as a truthful one

How could they dare to accuse him of telling lies? He was known by everybody as a truthful one. The testimony of one

of his bitterest enemies, ‘Utba ibn Abi Rabi’a, is enough to prove that even his enemies admitted his truthfulness.

The leaders of the Quraysh assembled once more to discuss how to prevent the spread of Islam and arrived at the decision of sending ‘Utba to God’s Messenger. ‘Utba went to him in the hope of persuading him to stop preaching Islam and asked: ‘O Muhammad, are you, or was your father, better?‘

God’s Messenger did not answer, probably because silence is the best answer to an idiot question. ‘Utba continued: ‘If your father was better than you, he cannot have been following the religion you are now preaching. If, by contrast, you are better than your father, then I am ready to listen to what you will say.‘

God’s Messenger asked ‘Utba: ‘Is that all you intend to say?’ ‘Utba said, ‘Yes’, and stopped. Then, God’s Messenger knelt and began reciting from the beginning of the Chapter called *al-Fussilat* By the time he reached the thirteenth verse, *But if they turn away, then say ‘I warn you of a thunderbolt [as fell in times past upon the tribes] of ‘Ad and Thamud*, ‘Utba was trembling as if caught by fever. He had to put his hand on the lips of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and said: ‘Please stop, for the sake of the God in whom you believe!’

‘Utba returned home in bewilderment. The leaders of the Quraysh had been waiting for him anxiously. Fearing that ‘Utba might have accepted Islam, Abu Jahl knocked at his door and, when admitted, angered ‘Utba by saying:

I heard that Muhammad treated you very generously and banqueted you, and in return you believed in him. This is what the people are gossiping about.

‘Utba was angered and responded to Abu Jahl, saying: ‘You know well that I do not need his banqueting. I am the richest among you. But the words of Muhammad shook me. They were not poetry, nor did they resemble the words of a soothsayer. I do not know how I should respond. He is a truthful person. While I was listening to his recitation, I feared that what happened to ‘Ad and Thamud might befall us.

They had been long expecting the Prophet and knew his character very well. They had never heard him tell a lie and accordingly called him ‘the Trustworthy One’. They were charmed by his personality and the eloquence of the Qur’an. However, they could not overcome their pride and arrogance, their feelings of envy and rivalry, that they might believe in him, nor were they able to change their habits and lifestyle to submit themselves to his Message. Is the same not true of all who, although they have known the truth, have since persisted in unbelief all over the world?

PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE PROPHETS WERE SENT TO ILLUMINATE THE WAY OF MANKIND

Today, the greatest problem of mankind is that they do not recognize the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and that they neglect and, in some parts of the world, even refuse, to follow his way. God sent Muhammad, as He had sent all the previous Prophets, to illuminate the way of mankind. He said:

> *God was gracious to the believers when He raised up among them a Messenger from themselves who recites to them the verses (of His Book) and shows them His signs [in their selves and in the universe], purifies them [of their sins and their deviations of thought and belief], and instructs them in the Book and the Wisdom. They were evidently in manifest misguidance before. (Al 'Imran, 3.164)*

God sent Messengers to mankind throughout the ages so that mankind might be guided to the truth and be purified of sins. Those who were enlightened by the Messengers of God, found the way to the Divine Presence and attained the highest rank of humanity. In the words of Ibrahim Haqqi, 'God declared that He could not be contained by heavens and earth; He can be known and reached through hearts only.' It is for this reason that the Messengers led mankind to the knowledge of God. Through them, He was deeply felt by the 'innermost senses' of people. The 'innermost sense' of man, whether we call it heart or soul, or 'conscience', is so great that through it man can 'grasp' God with all His greatness and other attributes. God cannot be contained by the heavens and earth. Minds cannot comprehend Him. Philosophical thoughts are by no means sufficient to reach Him. It is only through his soul or heart that a man can rise to the holy Presence of God. Therefore, it was the Prophets who purified the souls so that they could be the mirrors in which God might manifest Himself. The Prophet Muhammad is the last and greatest of these Prophets, and he left us the Qur'an and Sunna so that we can, by following them, live in accordance with the purpose for which all the Prophets were sent.

Before further elaboration on the Divine purpose for sending the Prophets, I would like to emphasize three points.

The Prophets were chosen men through whom God manifested Himself

Firstly, the Prophets were far from being as some lacking in manners and sound reflection have described them. They were not, as some think, ordinary men like us. They were chosen men through whom God manifested Himself. God chose them from among people and paid great attention to their upbringing, so that during their life they would always seek to gain His approval. Like his predecessors, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, always pursued God's good pleasure and his last words were: 'To Rafiq al-A'la (the Highest Abode)'. 'A'isha, Mother of Believers, gives the following account of his last moments:

> I was with him during his last moments. Whenever he became ill, he used to ask me to pray for him and, expecting my prayer to be accepted through the blessing of his auspicious hand, I held his hand and prayed. During his last illness, I wanted to do the same and pray, when he suddenly withdrew his hand and said, '*to Rafiq al-A'la*'!

Secondly, the world has never been devoid of the successors to the mission of Prophethood, who devote their lives to the dissemination of truths. They should seek what the Prophets sought, they should preach what the Prophets preached, and they should strictly follow the Prophets in performing their duties — in enjoining good and forbidding evil. By explaining the Divine purpose for sending the Prophets, I hope I will be able to shed some light on the way of those who try to lead the people along the path of the Prophets.

Death is not total annihilation

Thirdly, death is not total annihilation. It is only a changing of the worlds, but without completely breaking away from this one. In addition, the death of the Prophets is different from that of ordinary people. God declares about martyrs, whose spiritual degrees are lower than that of the Prophets,

> *Say not of those slain in God's way, 'They are dead', but they are alive but you understand not*' (*al-Baqarah*, 2.154).

So we should not say of the Prophets, 'they are dead'. For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, did not taste death in the manner we know; he only changed places and passed on into another dimension or degree of life. Those who can penetrate with their inner faculties into the dimensions other than the ones in which we live, can experience different dimensions of time and space. They can see different creatures and look into things and events from different viewpoints. We consider things and events according to the stream in which we are, but if we can rise high enough to see this stream with all its dimensions, and the scope of our sight is enlarged as we rise, then we will be able to obtain a more comprehensive capacity and standard in our judgement of everything. Thus, those who have been able to gain this capacity, while sitting among us, might also be sitting in the presence of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and God's Messenger himself may now be stroking the heads of some among us. While performing prayer here with us, he may also be leading the same prayer in the Hereafter before the angels. There is a particular class of saints called abdal – substitutes – for when one of them dies, he is immediately substituted with a new one, who can see the Prophet whenever they wish. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, a sixteenth-century scholar, once said: 'I have seen God's Messenger twenty-eight times while awake.'

After these introductory points, we shall explain the Divine purposes for sending the Prophets.

PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE PROPHETS WERE SENT TO GUIDE PEOPLE TO THE SERVICE OF GOD

God declared in the Qur'an:

> *I have not created jinn and mankind except to serve me. (al-Zariyat, 51.56)*

We have not been created to eat, drink and reproduce; these are natural facts of our life, and natural needs. The main purpose for our creation is to recognize God and serve Him. For this reason, all the Prophets were sent to show us the way to the service of God. Again, God declares in the Qur'an:

> *We never sent a Messenger before you except that We revealed to him, saying, 'there is no god but I, so serve Me!' (al-Anbiya', 21.25)*

> *Indeed, We sent forth among every nation a Messenger, saying, 'serve you God, and eschew 'taghut' [idols, tyrants, Satan and the party of Satan]'. Then some of them God guided and some were justly disposed to misguidance. (al-Nahl, 16.36)*

God sent the Prophets so that they might guide us to His service. All the Prophets were sent for the same purpose, with the exception that while the mission of all the previous Prophets was 'limited' to only one nation and a fixed period, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was sent as a mercy to all the 'worlds', including mankind and jinn.

The jinn are beings that we cannot see. According to an authentic narration, Ibn Mas'ud reports the following incident concerning the Prophet's preaching his Message to the jinn:

> Once God's Messenger and I went somewhere. He drew a circle around me and said, Do not leave this circle until I return. He went, and after a while, some tumults broke out on the other side. I wondered whether something had happened to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, but he had commanded me not to leave the circle until his return. Some time later, God's Messenger returned and I asked him about the uproar. He replied: The jinn have believed in, and taken the oath of allegiance to, me. When some among them insisted on unbelief, fighting broke out between them. The uproar you heard was the fighting. This implies that my life is about to terminate.

By this last sentence, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, meant that the purpose for his being sent was to open the way to the guidance of mankind and jinn, and once this way was opened, it would be of no use for him to live longer because there was nothing more left to him to do in life. This also implies that a believer should never be neglectful of his essential duty in this world and pray to God, as instructed by God's Messenger, saying, '*O God, make me die if death is good for me; or else, make me live long as long as living is good for me*!'

THE PROPHETS TAUGHT PEOPLE GOD'S LAWS

Another purpose for sending the Prophets is to communicate to people the Divine Commandments, like the obligations of performing five daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and paying the zakat, and the prohibitions of all kinds of illicit sexual intercourse, drinking alcohol and gambling. But for the Prophets, we could not have known the Divine Commandments. This function of the Prophets is called 'Messengership', concerning which the Qur'an declares,

> *They deliver the Messages of God and fear Him, and do not fear anyone except God. (al-Ahzab, 33.39)*

God said to the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings:

> *O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to you from your Lord; for if you do not, you will have not performed His Messengership. God protects you against people; verily God will not guide the people of unbelief. (al-Ma'idah, 5.67)*

The mission of the Messenger was to enlighten all of humanity concerning every dimension of their life

The mission of the Messenger was to enlighten all of humanity concerning every dimension of their life. So, any neglect in delivering God's Message would be an unforgivable fault for it would amount to leaving humanity in darkness. For this reason, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was continually in search of unadulterated minds and hearts to which he could impart God's Message.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, might have offered his Message only a few times to those like Abu Bakr and 'Umar, but he must have offered it to Abu Jahl and the like at least fifty times. Each time he appeared before them, he would say: Proclaim, 'There is no deity but God', and be saved! He would visit the places where people gathered and carry the fragrance of the same words, Proclaim, 'There is no deity but God', and be saved!

Fairs used to be held periodically in places around Makka such as 'Arafat, Mina, Muzdalifah and 'Aqabah, and he used to visit all of them every year, preaching the same truth tirelessly.

A time came when reactions, which had begun with indifference and continued with derision and mocking and finally with persecutions, tortures and boycotting, reached an unbearable point and the Makkan polytheists offered no hope for further conversions. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, took Zayd ibn Haritha with him and went to Ta'if. Unfortunately, there, too, he was faced with violent anger and terror. The children of Ta'if, positioned on either side of the road, threw stones at him. There was not a square inch of space on his body not vulnerable to the stones. However, he finally succeded in leaving the town and reached a tree under which he took shelter, bleeding profusely. He held up his hands and supplicated:

A heart-rending supplication

> O God, unto You do I complain of my frailty, lack of resources and lack of significance before those people. O Most Merciful of the merciful, You are the Lord of the oppressed and You are my Lord. To whom do You abandon me? To that alien who looks askance and makes grimaces at me? Or to that enemy to whom You have given mastery over me? If, however, Your indignation is not against me, I have no worry. But Your grace is much greater for me to wish for. I seek refuge in the light of Your Countenance, which illumines all darkness and by which the affairs of this life and the Hereafter have been rightly

ordered, lest Your wrath alight upon me, or Your indignation descend upon me. I expect Your forgiveness until You are pleased, and there is no other resource nor any power but in You.

He had just finished his supplication when he saw a tray placed before him. A Christian slave from Nineveh, who had seen God's Messenger, upon him be peace, being stoned and tormented from the vineyard where he had been working, had put some grapes in a tray and brought it to him. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said, *In the name of God* as he began to eat. This surprised Addas, the Christian slave. It was the first time he heard this phrase during his time among the polytheists.

'Who are you? What has made you come here?', he asked.

On hearing the answer, *I am Muhammad, from Makka, the Last Prophet*, he said with tears in his eyes, Addas remarked: 'God has made me find you'. He then embraced Islam.

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, performed his mission incessantly throughout his life. As a result of his tireless efforts, the circle of light broadened day by day, and the party of unbelief became more and more frustrated, just as the unbelievers are in rage today at the Islamic revival currently encompassing the whole world.

They desire to extinguish with their mouths God's light; and God refuses but to perfect His light, though the unbelievers are averse. (al-Tawba, 9.32)

If God has lit a candle, it is impossible to extinguish it just by blowing

When Makka proved to no longer be fertile ground for further developments, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, emigrated to Madina, where he continued calling to Islam. He had to face the antagonism of the Jews and hypocrites and fight many battles during his ten years in Madina.

In the twenty-third year of his mission, he began to feel the time for departure was approaching. He had performed the minor pilgrimage a few times, but he had not been able to carry out the major pilgrimage. In that year he managed to fulfil this sacred duty. He climbed the hill of 'Arafat' on the back of his camel and gave a sermon known as the Farewell Sermon. In this sermon, he emphasized that feuds and transactions involving interest were strictly forbidden; reminded the congregation once more of the rights of women; talked about family ties and mentioned tribal and national relationships. A huge tearful congregation listened to him. While delivering his sermon, he frequently asked them if he had communicated God's Message. With each positive reply, he held up his blessed index finger towards the sky and said:

O God, be the witness!

In deep consciousness of Divine service, he might have thought, 'God sent me to the world to perform the duty of Messengership. Just as these people bore witness to the fulfilment of my duty, I hope I may be regarded as having truly done it.' He was prepared to meet God in perfect satisfaction.

PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE PROPHETS WERE EXAMPLES

To set a good example for other people was another duty of the Prophets - a duty which we must also always observe consciously. After mentioning the Prophets in the Chapter entitled *al-An'am*, God commanded His last Messenger:

> *Those are they whom God has guided, so follow their guidance! (al-An'am, 6.90)*

We are commanded by God to follow the example of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings:

The best example to follow

> *You have a good example in God's Messenger for whoever hopes for God and the Last Day, and remembers God oft. (al-Ahzab, 33.21)*

God's Messenger is our leader. As we stand in prayer according to the way he prayed, we must also follow him in every walk of our life. Those who followed him in the first Islamic century were the real representatives of the true Islamic life. God's Messenger says concerning this period:

> Muslim armies will arrive, after me, at the gates of cities, where they will be asked, 'Did anyone among you see the Prophet?' The answer will be affirmative, and the gates will be opened for them. Those who succeeded them will also perform jihad and they will be asked, 'Are there any people among you who saw those who had seen the Prophet?' They will reply, 'Yes', and the cities will be conquered by them. There will finally come the third generation, who will be asked, 'Did anybody among you see those who had seen the followers of the Prophet's Companions?' When this question, too, receives an affirmative answer, the conquest will also be bestowed upon them.

Again, in another narration by Bukhari and Muslim, God's Messenger says concerning those three succeeding generations: *The best of you are those who live in my period, then those who succeed them, and then those who follow them.*

Those three generations strictly followed in the Prophet's footsteps and, accordingly, were granted great victories throughout the world. Jesus, upon him be peace, had predicted them, saying, 'The banners of the holy ones are in their hands'. (See, Ibrahim al-Halabi, *Sira*, 1.218) These holy ones are the Companions of Muhammad and those who follow his way in every century.

An outstanding example among the Prophet's community

In a Tradition, although with a weak chain of transmission, God's Messenger declares: *The pious scholars of my nation resemble the Prophets of the Children of Israel*. From them, 'Umar submitted himself to God so sincerely that he did his duty of servanthood to God much more effectively than expected of him. During his caliphate, Iran, Iraq and Egypt were conquered. Muslim armies were fighting in a vast area under the command of great commanders such as Abu 'Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah, Shurahbil ibn Hasana, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, 'Amr ibn al-'As and Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan. Jerusalem was also conquered during his caliphate. When the supreme commander of the Muslim army wanted the priests to submit the keys of the city, the priests answered, 'We cannot see among you the man to whom we are to submit the keys'. They had read in their religious books the features of the person who would take over the keys. It was 'Umar.

'Umar ruled over lands twenty times the size of Turkey, but he did not have a private camel to travel on. He set out on

a camel belonging to the state treasury, accompanied by his servant.

While the priests and Muslim commanders were waiting in Jerusalem, ‘Umar was advancing towards his destination on the camel, which he rode in turn with his servant. When they approached the river Jordan, the commanders awaiting his arrival on the other side of the river were excited, praying, ‘O God, let it be the turn of ‘Umar to ride the camel when they get to this river, for these Romans are fond of pomp and display. They may not esteem us if they see the Caliph pulling a camel ridden by a servant’. But God had destined that ‘Umar would pull the camel carrying the servant across the river. When ‘Umar approached, the priests noticed, among other things, several patches on his robe. This was the man described in their books. They submitted the keys of Jerusalem to him.

‘Umar never deviated from the path of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. After being stabbed by a Magian slave, while on his deathbed, he would refuse food and water because he was too weak, yet when it was time for prayer, he performed the prayer with his wounds bleeding and said, ‘The one who abandons prayer has nothing to do with Islam’.

‘Umar did so because he was taught by God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. He followed his ‘Master’ strictly and himself was to be followed by the succeeding generations.

PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE PROPHETS ESTABLISHED THE BALANCE BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT

The Prophets were sent to establish a balance between this world and the Hereafter.

At a time when some led an isolated life in monasteries and others drowned in luxury, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, came with the Qur'anic instruction:

> Seek, amidst that which God has given you, the Last Abode, and forget not your portion of the present world. (*al-Qasas*, 28.77)

All of the Prophets, peace be upon them all, came to establish this balance – the balance between material and spiritual life, between reason and soul, between this world and the next and between indulgence and abstinence. While we should, on the one hand, declare all that God has bestowed on us in order to indicate our gratitude and due praise for Him, as commanded in the Qur'an, *And as for your Lord's blessing and bounty, declare it* (*al-Duha*, 93.11), we should not forget, on the other hand, that we will be asked to account for every good we enjoy, as announced, again, in the Qur'an, *Then you shall be questioned that day concerning every good you enjoy* (*al-Takathur*, 102.8).

This principle, like the others, was so deeply inculcated by the Prophet in the hearts of his Companions that it could be seen in every aspect of their lives. To cite an example: it was the time of breaking fast on a day of Ramadan when Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, was offered a glass of cold water. He had just taken a sip when he suddenly burst into tears and stopped drinking. When asked why, he replied:

> I was once with God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. He did something as if he was pushing something with his hand and saying to it, 'Keep aloof from me!' I said to him: 'O God's Messenger! You are pushing something away, but I cannot see anything.'

He answered:

> The world appeared to me in an ideal form and presented itself to me with all its pomp and luxury. I pushed it, saying, Leave me; you will not be able to seduce me into accepting you. It withdrew itself and said: 'I am not able to conquer you, but I swear by God that I will captivate those who come after you.'

After narrating the Tradition, Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, may God be pleased with him, concluded: 'At this time of breaking fast, I thought that the world allured me with a glass of cold water, and I wept.'

Abu Bakr and most of the other Companions lived a balanced life despite the fact that they had every possibility to live in comfort.

THE PROPHETS WERE GOD’S WITNESSES

One of the reasons why the Prophets were sent is that mankind might have no argument against God in the Hereafter. Regarding this, the Qur’an says:

> Messengers bearing good tidings and warning, so that mankind might have no argument against God. (*al-Nisa’*, 4.165)

Mankind, who have followed many so-called guides or leaders only to be led astray, have reached the truth through the guidance of the Prophets, upon them be peace. They were the servants of God created for a special mission. They were ‘Prophets’ in the wombs of their mothers. Their birth was marked with extraordinary events. Their lives resembled a beautiful symphony, being perfectly harmonious and balanced. Their words came out of their mouths like a sweet melody and penetrated into souls like a perfect penetrating lyric; the whole of existence, animate or inanimate, hearkened to them. Among the miracles of the lord of lords, upon him be peace and blessings, is that trees and rocks greeted him and answered his call. In his well-known Qasidat al-Bur‘a, Busiri says, *Trees answered his call, prostrated*. When he called them, trees cleft the earth and came to him. Besides living beings, inanimate things, too, acquired a meaning through his advent, and existence attained the state of being ‘cosmos’ out of the chaotic state, and each thing became a tongue glorifying God with praise, as declared in the Qur’an:

> There is not a thing that does not glorify Him with praise, but you do not understand their glorification. (*al-Isra’*, 17.44)

There is an extraordinary harmony in the universe, which displays the existence and unity of God. Nothing is created in vain. Like every other creature, man also was not created without purpose. The Qur‘an declares:

> Does man think that he will be left aimless? (*al-Qiyamah*, 75.36)

If the Prophets had not been sent, man might have had an argument against being punished in the Hereafter. But, as the Qur’an states, *We never punish until We have sent a Messenger* (*al-Isra’*, 17.15), God would not punish anyone without having sent them Prophets. He sent them so that the good might be distinguished from the bad. After the Prophets, mankind would no longer have any argument against God’s punishment or reward.

THE PROPHETS DEPENDED ON REVELATION AND SUBMITTED THEMSELVES WHOLLY TO GOD

Although every Prophet possessed brilliant intelligence, an overall capacity of understanding and a pure soul, Prophethood is not a position acquired through brilliance of intelligence or studying of books. Most Prophets, including the Last One, were unlettered. Their teacher was God. The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, despite not being able to read, had knowledge of the past and the future, and insight into every branch of knowledge. Although he did not go to school, nor was taught by any human, he was, as admitted even by his enemies, past and present, the most just in family affairs, the most competent in state administration, and the best in the command of armies.

The Prophets were specially brought up by God. To cite an example, the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, recalled:

> I intended only twice in my childhood to attend a wedding ceremony. On both occasions, I was overpowered by sleep half-way.
>
> He also remembered:
>
> During the restoration of the Ka'ba, prior to my Prophethood, I was carrying stones. As everyone did, I lifted the skirt of my garment over my shoulder to avoid injury, which left some part of my thighs uncovered. All of a sudden, the angel that I had seen several times in my childhood appeared to me in all his majesty. I fell down and fainted. That was the first and last time I uncovered any part of my body which God has ordered to be covered.

The Prophets were protected by God against all kinds of sin, whether major or minor, because they were created for a special purpose. They were protected from falling, since their going astray even an inch could result in almost complete deviation of mankind.

Prophethood is distinguished by Divine Revelation

Prophethood is distinguished by Divine Revelation, concerning which the Qur'an says:

> *And thus have We revealed to you a spirit of Our command. You did not know what the Scripture was, nor what the faith. But We have made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants. And you, surely you guide unto a straight path. (al-Shura', 42.52)*

The Prophets never spoke as a result of whims and fancies

The Prophets never spoke as a result of whims and fancies. The Qur'an declares:

> *Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is nought but a Revelation revealed. (al-Najm, 53.3-4)*

The Prophet Muhammad, when asked something related to, particularly, the essentials of belief, would not answer, rather he would wait for Revelation. There were times when he was asked by idolaters to make alterations in the Qur'an, but since the Qur'an is a Divine Scripture, whose wording and meaning completely belong to God, he responded to such wishes as commanded by God:

> *Say, 'It is not for me to alter it of my own accord. I follow nothing, except what is revealed*

> *to me.' (Yunus, 10.15)*

And it is because of the Qur'an being the Word of God that he bore all kinds of hardship and opposition.

The Prophets submitted themselves wholly to God and fulfilled their mission solely because God commanded them to. They never resorted to compromise in order to be successful and never deviated from their way. In the face of both threats and seductive offers, they always gave responses similar to what the Last Prophet gave on an occasion:

> If you were even to put the sun in my right hand, and the moon in the left, I will never give up preaching my cause.

THE PROPHETS WERE SINCERE IN EVERY ACTION

Another indispensable characteristic of the Prophets is sincerity. Sincerity is purity of intention – to do everything solely for the sake of God. We are all ordered to worship God sincerely, as declared in the Qur'an:

> *They were commanded only to serve God, making the religion His sincerely, men of pure faith, and to perform the prayer, and pay the alms. (al-Bayyinah, 98.5)*

God mentions sincerity as the foremost attribute of the Prophets. He says of Moses:

> *And mention in the Book Moses; he was made sincere, and he was a Messenger, a Prophet. (Maryam, 19.51)*

God chose all the Prophets, purified them and made them sincere to the utmost degree.

We worship God only because we are His slaves and He has commanded us to worship Him. By worshipping Him, we secure His approval and get the reward of our worship in the Hereafter. The greatest thinker of our century, Said Nursi, said in this respect:

> Do what you do only for God's sake; start for God's sake; work for God's sake and act within the sphere of God's good pleasure.

God's Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, was also the foremost in sincere worship of God, so that a day would come when someone said of him: 'No one can remain as humble as he was at the beginning of his career or quest after attaining its height. Muhammad was an exception to this.' He is so great, so sublime that we still stand in respect for him, although he used to warn his Companions, saying, *Do not stand up when I come upon you as the Persians do (for their elders*). Although his Companions respected him to the utmost degree, he deemed himself a poor slave of God. On the day when he conquered Makka, he was not different at all from the day when he humbly began his mission. At the outset of his mission, he would sit and eat with the poor and slaves. As he entered Makka as a victorious commander, he rode a mule in so deep submission and humility before God that he bent forward with his forehead touching the packsaddle of the beast. He was prostrating himself before God and taking refuge in Him from being a tyrannical, haughty conqueror.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had a single intention, namely, to please God and worship Him sincerely. He had to worship, and in fact did worship, Him at the level of perfect goodness and utmost sincerity, as he himself stated in a famous Tradition:

> Perfect goodness is to worship God as if you were seeing Him, and while you see Him not, yet truly he sees you.

The Prophet lived every second of his life in complete consciousness of being supervised by God.

PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE PROPHETS CALLED PEOPLE WISELY AND WITH KINDNESS

Another attribute of the Prophets is calling people to the way of God with wisdom and fair exhortation.

The Prophets never resorted to demagogy and dialectics. They always acted wisely and always spoke with wisdom. God ordered His Last and Greatest Messenger:

> *Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the best way. (al-Nahl, 16:125)*

Man is not a being that consists of a mind or heart only. He has a complex structure, composed of many faculties, including the mind, intellect, heart, soul and other innermost faculties. Each of these requires satisfaction, and the Prophets addressed all of them.

Those who were taught by the Prophets acquired certainty, and their view of things differed from those with limited external sight, devoid of insight and spiritual vision. Their conviction of religious truths was unshakeable, and they were continually fed with Divine Revelation. They did not merely speak without action nor act without contemplation. They combined speech with action, knowledge with practice and action with contemplation. Some among them, like 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, would say, *If the veil of the Unseen were lifted up, my certainty would not increase*. Their conviction was so strong that supposing they were to see with their eyes what they believed of the Unseen, their certainty would not increase. There was no further degree of certainty left for them to attain.

The education given by the Prophets to their disciples, or the function of the Prophets, is described in a precise way in the Qur'anic verse:

> *We have sent among you, of yourselves, a Messenger, to recite Our signs to you and to purify you, and to teach you the Book and Wisdom, and to teach you what you know not. (al-Baqara, 2.151)*

ALL THE PROPHETS CALLED HUMANKIND TO GOD'S UNITY

The cornerstone of the Prophetic mission was to preach Divine Unity. All the Prophets concentrated on this basic principle, as stated in the Qur'anic verse:

> *O my people, serve God: You have no god other than He. (Hud, 11.84)*

God sent many Prophets during human history. There is no people to whom a Prophet was not sent. The agreement of all the Prophets, who came at different times and in different places, on a single basic principle demonstrates, without doubt, that they did not speak or act on their own, but taught the Message they received from God. The disagreement of philosophers and thinkers – no matter how great they may be – depending on their own intellect and findings, and the differences of opinion frequently observed even within a philosophical or sociological school vis-à-vis the agreement and accord among the Prophets, undeniably prove that while the former propagate the outcome of their defective reasoning, the latter were taught by a Single, Eternal Teacher, God. This fact is also a strong evidence of Divine Unity, the principle on which they unanimously concentrated their mission, as declared by the Last of them:

> The most meritorious of the words spoken by me and the Prophets before me is: There is no god but God, He is One, having no partners.

THE ESSENTIALS OF PROPHETHOOD

The essentials of Prophethood common to all of the Prophets are, according to the theologians, as follows:

- Truthfulness.
- Trustworthiness.
- Communication of God's commands.
- Intelligence.
- Infallibility.
- Freedom from all kinds of bodily and mental defects.

I will try to elaborate upon each of these essential attributes with examples from the life of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings and, where appropriate, the lives of the other Messengers.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE PROPHETS WERE TRUTHFUL IN EVERYTHING THEY SAID

Truthfulness is the pivot or cornerstone of Prophethood. The Prophets, upon them be peace, always spoke the truth. No lies, explicit or implicit, were ever heard from them; they never deceived anyone. With this regard, praising the Prophets, the holy Qur'an declares:

> *Mention in the Book Abraham: Surely he was a most truthful Prophet. (Maryam, 19.41)*
>
> *Mention in the Book Ishmael; surely, he was a man of his word, and he was a Messenger, a Prophet. (Maryam, 19.54)*
>
> *Mention in the Book Enoch; surely he was a most truthful Prophet. We elevated him to an exalted place. (Maryam, 19.56–7)*

We also read in the Qur'an that a fellow prisoner addressed the Prophet Joseph, saying,

> *Joseph, O most truthful one*! (*Yusuf*, 12.46)

The Prophets had to be endowed with truthfulness as God wants everybody to be truthful and extols the truthful:

> *O you who believe, fear God and be with the company of the truthful! (al-Tawba, 9.119)*
>
> *The believers are but those people who believed in God and His Messenger without ever feeling doubt thereafter, and strove with their souls and possessions in the way of God; those are the ones who are the truthful. (al-Hujurat, 49.15)*

In another verse, the Qur'an praises the believers who, without faltering, carry out their promises:

> *Among the believers are the valiants who have kept their promise which they gave to God: Some of them carried out their word [and were martyred] and the others are expecting (their turn); they have never thought of going back on their word. (al-Ahzab, 33.23)*

A mercy for the whole of creation

This verse was revealed to extol the heroes of the Battle of Uhud. Uhud was a turning point in the early history of Islam. After the unbelievers of the Quraysh had suffered a decisive defeat at the Battle of Badr, they prepared for a whole year to strike a deadly retaliatory blow at the Muslims. The two sides then met at the foot of mount Uhud, a few miles from Madina. At the beginning of the war, the believers won a great victory and the polytheists of the Quraysh started to flee the battlefield. Just at this crucial point, the archers whom God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had positioned at the pass of 'Aynayn, left their positions, against the Prophet's command and pursued the enemy. Khalid ibn Walid, then commander of the cavalry division of the enemy, took this opportunity to surround the Muslims from behind, and as a consequence, the Muslims experienced a reverse. Many leading figures, like Hamza, Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, 'Abd Allah ibn Jahsh and Anas ibn Nadr, were martyred, and the holy Prophet himself was wounded. Let us note here that during the battle, God's noble Messenger, the Prophet of forgiveness and mercy, who was sent as a mercy for creation, upon him be peace and blessings, held his hands towards God and, with his body bleeding profusely, prayed for the forgiveness of the enemy, saying: *O God, forgive my people, for they do not know.*

Anas ibn Nadr, the uncle of Anas ibn Malik, the servant of God's Messenger, took the oath of allegiance with God's Messenger in 'Aqabah, prior to his emigration to Madina. He was not able, for some reason, to take part in the Battle

of Badr. Anas was extremely regretful about his absence and explained to God's Messenger how he felt: 'O Messenger of God, if God allows us to confront them once more, they will see what sufferings I will inflict on them!'

At Uhud, he fought self-sacrificingly especially when the Muslims suffered the reverse. In his last moments, smiling, he said to Mu'adh ibn Jabal: *By God! I sense the scent of Paradise behind Uhud*.

The Qur'an exalts in the above verse those martyrs who had fulfilled their promise to God through His Messenger, as well as the others expecting martyrdom to show that they were men of their word. It should not, however, be held that this verse sings their praises exclusively, rather it extols every truthful person who keeps his promise and fulfils his covenant.

Muhammad was called the Trustworthy One

God's Messenger was known as a truthful person even in the time of *jahiliyya*. All the Makkans, including the unbelievers, called him the Trustworthy One, or the Truthful. His truthfulness was so well known that even after he proclaimed his Prophethood, his enemies would still not accuse him of lying.

After the Treaty of *Hudaybiya*, in the sixth year of the *Hijra*, God's Messenger sent letters to the rulers of the neighbouring countries. When the letter sent to the Emperor of Byzantium reached him in Syria, a Makkan trade caravan headed by Abu Sufyan, was also in the area of Damascus. The Emperor summoned Abu Sufyan and the following conversation took place between them.

— Do the elite or the weak mostly follow him?

— The weak do.

— Has any apostatized after conversion to his religion?

— So far, nobody has.

— Do his followers increase or decrease?

— They are increasing day by day.

— Have you ever heard him tell a lie?

— No, never.

"It is inconceivable for one who has never told a lie during his whole life, to invent lies against God."

Having been struck by the answers of Abu Sufyan, who was then the most bitter enemy of Islam, the Emperor acknowledged Muhammad's position, saying: '*It is inconceivable for one who has never told a lie during his whole life, to invent lies against God*!'

The Emperor was right. It is impossible to think that a believing man who did not tell a single lie, even for a joke, up to the age of forty, would begin to lie, particularly against God, at a time when he is getting closer to the grave.

All the Makkans unanimously agreed upon the truthfulness of God's Messenger, as another example illustrates. Once before his conversion, Yasir asked his son, 'Ammar: 'Where are you going?'

'To Muhammad!' he replied.

The answer was enough for Yasir to be satisfied about the safety and company of his son. He remarked:

Muhammad is a trustworthy person. The Makkans recognize him so. If he claims Prophethood, he must be telling the truth since no one has ever heard him tell a lie.

Muhammad always encouraged truthfulness

As himself a truthful person, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, always encouraged truthfulness. For example, he once declared:

> Promise me the following six things and I will promise you Paradise: When you speak, speak the truth; when you give a promise, carry it out; when something is entrusted to you, do not breach the trust; always keep chaste without being involved in any illicit intercourse; keep your eyes away from what is unlawful and hold your hands back from the forbidden.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, rose, because of his truthfulness, to the rank that his nearness to God is expressed metaphorically in the Qur'an as follows:

> *Then he approached and came nearer, till he was [distant] two bow-lengths, or even nearer. (al-Najm, 53.8-9)*

Abandon what arouses in you suspicion and follow what is certain. For truthfulness gives satisfaction but lying causes suspicion, the Prophet declared.

"Seek truthfulness even if it might bring you to ruin"

Seek truthfulness even if it might bring you to ruin; in it lies real salvation, he told us.

In another Tradition he said:

> It is incumbent upon you to be always truthful for truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. If a man is always truthful and seeks truthfulness, he is recorded by God as a truthful one. Always avoid lying for lying leads to shamefulness and shamefulness leads to Hell. If a man insists on lying and seeks deceit, he is recorded by God as a liar.

Truthfulness always brings salvation even if it causes one's death, for man tastes death through truthfulness only once, whereas in each and every lie is a different kind of death. One of the most striking examples is the case of Ka'b ibn Malik.

The story of a hero of truthfulness

Ka'b was one of the Helpers, Ansar, who took the oath of allegiance with God's Messenger at 'Aqabah. He was a famous poet. Although he took part in almost all the battles, he missed the campaign of Tabuk and had no justifiable excuse.

The campaign of Tabuk was a very difficult one. It was in the mid-summer and, what is more, against the Roman Empire. Although God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, used to keep secret the destination of his

military campaigns, on this occasion he disclosed it and wanted every believer to take part in it.

Although Ka'b completed his preparations for the campaign, at the last minute, uncharacteristic negligence kept him from joining the Muslim army.

When God's Messenger returned from the campaign, he questioned those who had remained behind about their absence. Among them were some hypocrites, who lied and made up excuses. But for Ka'b it was impossible to tell a lie, so he told the truth. God's Messenger told him to go. Thereafter, Ka'b and the two other believers in the same situation, were boycotted upon the order of God's Messenger. This meant that no Muslim met with them or spoke to them. They openly showed repentance and asked God for forgiveness. This continued for fifty days. In the end, a verse was revealed, stating that their repentance was accepted and that they were forgiven:

> *As for those three, the acceptance of their repentance was delayed until, for them, the earth, vast as it is, was straitened and their own souls were straitened to them, and they perceived that there is no fleeing from God and no refuge but with Him. Then He accepted their repentance so that they could recover their former state. Verily, God is the One who accepts repentance, Most Merciful. (al-Tawba, 9.118)*

After the revelation of this verse, Ka'b ibn Malik told God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings: 'I promise that I will always speak the truth as long as I live.'

Truthfulness is the pivot of Prophethood

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, truthfulness is the pivot of Prophethood. If, God forbid, a Prophet had told even a single lie, everything to do with the Divine religion would have been upset. For even a single lie is enough to raise doubts about his mission. Regarding this, God declares in the Qur'an:

> If he [Muhammad] had invented false sayings concerning Us, We would surely have grasped him firmly, and then cut off the artery of his heart, and none of you could have withheld Us from doing this. *(al-Haqqa*, 69:44–7)

The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, never lied or broke his promise, either prior to his Prophethood or during it. A Companion remembered:

Prior to his Prophethood, we made an appointment to meet somewhere. It was, however, three days after the appointed time that I remembered it. When I hastened to the appointed place, I found the future Prophet waiting for me. He was neither angry nor offended. His reaction was only to say: O young man, you have given me some trouble. I have been waiting for you here for three days.

PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

EXAMPLES OF THE PREDICTIONS OF GOD'S MESSENGER

It is enough to establish one's truthfulness that one has not been heard telling even a single lie during one's whole life. However, if the person is a Prophet who has brought a universal system from God, people will expect him to offer explanations and to establish rules in all fields of life – theology, law, sociology, human psychology, economics, history, etc. – and to be proven to be truthful in all of them.

The explanations of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, concerning theology — Divine Essence, Attributes and Names — are such that philosophers, religious scholars, and saints cannot compete with him. What, in fact, they can and should do, is to study his explanations and try to perceive the truths his words contain.

God's Messenger dealt with, besides those pertaining to Divine Essence and Attributes, the most subtle matters of Destiny and man's free will so ably and convincingly that without his account no one can obtain a true understanding of these matters.

What he reported concerning the past nations and previous Prophets have all been confirmed by historical research and the followers of previous Scriptures. Although he was unlettered, neither read a book nor was taught by any human, he established the most rational, practical and just rules in every field of life such that, as a result, a large portion of mankind have experienced true happiness for centuries under his banner. Indeed, the religion, the universal system of life that was revealed to him from God, continues to offer a unique alternative for the future of mankind in general, and the happy world of the future will be built upon its principles.

What I would like, however, to emphasize here, concerning his truthfulness, is that out of hundreds of his predictions, the vast majority have already come true, and the remainder will be proven when their time is due.

'Umar reports that one day he, upon whom be peace, ascended the pulpit after the dawn prayer and spoke about almost everything from the creation of the world to the Last Day, including certain past events and what will befall mankind until that Day. These predictions, together, clearly demonstrate that his teacher was God, the All-Knowing, and that he did not speak on his own but always communicated what was revealed to him. Before giving specific examples of his predictions, I think it worthwhile to clarify a few points concerning knowledge of the Unseen.

Knowledge of the Unseen

The concept of the Unseen pertains to what is supra-sensory and metaphysical or even meta-cosmic. In this sense, the past, as well as the future and everything beyond ordinary human senses are all included in the concept of the Unseen, provided that some concrete indications have not been manifest. However, in a narrower sense of the concept, the Unseen pertains only to the future and what I intend here to concentrate on is the tidings God's Messenger gave of certain future events.

The knowledge of the Unseen is, first of all, with God. This is evident from some Qur'anic verses, such as the following:

> With Him are the keys of the Unseen, none knows them but He. He knows whatever is in the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but He knows it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth nor anything wet, fresh or dry but is in a Manifest Record. (*al-An'am*, 6.59)
>
> Say, [O Muhammad]: 'I do not tell you that with me are the treasures of God, nor that I know the Unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel. I but follow what is revealed to me'. Say: 'Are the blind and the one who sees equal? Will you not then reflect'? (*al-An'am*, 6.50)

> Say: ‘I have no power over any benefit or harm to myself except as God wills. If I had the knowledge of the Unseen, I should increase good for myself and no evil should have touched me. I am but a warner and a bringer of glad tidings unto people who believe’. (*al-A‘raf,* 7.188)

These verses clearly state that the knowledge of the Unseen is with God. Does this, however, mean that no one can, by God’s leave, obtain any part of the knowledge of the Unseen?

Can anybody obtain any part of the knowledge of the Unseen?

In order to answer this question, we should consider the following points:

1. Everything man has, like health, knowledge, and power, essentially belongs to God and is, accordingly, from God. We have no power except that with which He has endowed us . We have no knowledge except what He has taught us or what He has enabled us to learn. Likewise, we see through His enabling us to see and hear through His enabling us to hear. Since this is so, the verses do not absolutely exclude man from possessing, by God’s leave, some knowledge of the Unseen.

2. The concept of the Unseen does not only relate to the future, it also relates to the past. The Qur’an presents the stories of past nations as the stories of the Unseen. Historical researches make us informed of the past.

3. Many people can, by God’s Will, get some glimpse of the future, partly or generally, in dreams or through some other ways which it is not proper to explain here.

4. The Qur’an, like the universe and man, is an organic entity, each verse being interrelated to the others. So, the first and foremost interpreter of the Qur’an is the Qur’an itself. In which case, the complete and true understanding of a verse depends on the understanding of other relevant verses. As a principle of creed, and as explicitly declared in the verses mentioned above, the knowledge of the Unseen, like power, seeing, and hearing, belongs to God. However, He reveals the knowledge of some of the Unseen to a Messenger whom He has chosen, as declared in the following verse:

> [God alone is] the knower of the Unseen and He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone, except a Messenger whom He has chosen. (*al-Jinn*, 72.26–7)

God revealed to His Messenger many of His secrets and the Messenger informed his nation about some of them which they needed to know. The number of the predictions which he made and were reported in authentic books of Tradition exceeds three hundred. These predictions fall into three categories:

1. His predictions concerning his own time;

2. The predictions relating to events that would follow his departure from the world;

3. His miraculous explanations, which seem, at first sight, easy to make but can only be understood in conjunction with scientific developments.

In the following sections, some examples will be given from each category.

PREDICTIONS OF GOD'S MESSENGER RELATED TO EVENTS THAT WOULD FOLLOW HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE WORLD

Recorded in the reliable books of Tradition, there are as many as, or even more than, three hundred predictions of this kind. Out of them, I will cite a few examples.

1. The Messenger foretold and warned against the internal conflicts to appear in the Muslim community

Bukhari and Muslim report from Usama, who was much loved by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Usama says:

> One day I was with God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, on the roof of a tall building in Madina. Looking around, God's Messenger said: *Now I see seditious events and internal conflicts pouring down like drops of rain, among your houses*.

'Umar was very afraid of the appearance of disorder and sedition in the Muslim community. One day during his caliphate, he asked Hudhayfa about them. Hudhayfa responded: 'They have nothing to do with you, O 'Umar. There is a gate between you and them'. 'Umar asked again: 'Will this gate be opened or broken down?' Hudhayfa answered: 'It will be broken down'. This answer shook 'Umar, who reacted: ' Then, this gate will never be closed again!' 'Umar was the gate between the Muslim community and sedition.

After he was stabbed by a treacherous Persian slave, Muslim unity received a fatal blow, and the following centuries, till today, have unfortunately witnessed discord and sedition in Muslim lands.

2. The Messenger foretold the spread of Islam in the world

Bukhari and Abu Dawud quote Habbab ibn Arat, who said:

> Once, during the days of trouble and torture in Makka, I went to God's Messenger, who was sitting in the shade of the Ka'ba. I was still a slave in the hands of Makkans then. They inflicted on me severe tortures. Unable to endure those tortures any more, I requested God's Messenger to pray to God for help and salvation. But he turned towards me and said:
>
> By God, previous communities had to endure more pitiless tortures. Some of them were made to lie in ditches and cut in two with saws but this did not make them forsake their faith. They were skinned alive but they never became weak against the enemy. Surely God will perfect this religion, but you display undue haste. A day will come when a woman will travel alone by herself from San'a to Hadramut fearing nothing but wild beasts. However, you show impatience.

Habbab concluded: 'By God, what God's Messenger predicted that day, has all come true. I have personally witnessed it all.'

3. The Messenger predicted who would die first from among his family after his own death

During his last illness, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, called his beloved daughter, Fatima, to his bedside. He whispered something to her, which caused Fatima to burst into tears. Afterwards, he called her again and this time too, he whispered something to her. This made Fatima display great joy.

‘A’isha, Mother of Believers, saw this and asked Fatima what he had said. ‘This is a secret belonging to God’s Messenger,’ she replied. However, when ‘A’isha asked again after the death of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, Fatima answered: ‘*The first time he called me, he said that he would die of that illness, which made me weep bitterly. When, however, he called me the second time, he gave me the glad tiding that I would be the first among his family to join him after his death, and this made me very joyful*.’

Everything happened just as God’s Messenger predicted. He died of that illness and, six months later, Fatima, his beloved daughter and the mother of his blessed progeny, was reunited with him.18

4. The Messenger predicted the reconciliation of the Muslim armies by means of his grandson Hasan

As related in most of the six authentic books of Tradition, one day on the pulpit, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, took Hasan, his grandson, into his arms and declared:

> This son of mine is a noble one; it is hoped that God will reconcile through him two large hosts of Muslims.

Hasan was, indeed, a noble person, the grandson of the noblest of humanity. About thirty-five years after this prediction, he renounced the caliphate in favour of Mu‘awiya, thus demonstrating the truthfulness of his noble grandfather.

5. The Messenger foretold exactly how long Ibn Busr would live

One day, he put his blessed hand on the head of ‘Abd Allah ibn Busr, declaring: *This boy will live a hundred years, and those warts on his face will disappear*.

‘Abd Allah lived, as predicted by God’s Messenger, a hundred years, and when he died, there were no warts on his face.

Just as God’s Messenger developed spiritually moment by moment and begged God’s forgiveness seventy times a day for his former states, so too, his community have since taken a new step every day in recognition and understanding of him through witnessing his predictions being proven true one after another.

6. The Messenger foretold the conquest of Iran, the Yemen and Byzantine lands

As recorded in almost all books of Tradition and the Prophet’s biography, a ditch was dug around Madina during the battle of *Khandaq* (the Ditch). The Prophet actually took part in the work of digging and, in order to reinforce the morale of his Companions, occasionally prayed for them, saying, *O God, the true life is the life of the Hereafter, so forgive the Helpers and the Emigrants*. To this, his Companions responded in utmost zeal and joy, saying.

> O God, had it not been for Your help and grace, we could not have found the Straight Path, we had not paid alms, nor had we performed the prayer. And so, send down upon us serenity, and make our steps firm if we encounter the enemy!

During the digging of the ditch, a huge rock appeared. The Companions, unable to remove it, referred the matter to God’s Messenger. He came with a lever and pickaxe, and set out to break the rock. At each blow, a spark was produced and, through God’s inspiration, he gave glad tidings of a future conquest, saying, *I have been given the keys of Byzantium; I have been given the keys of Persia; I have been given the keys of the Yemen*, and so on.

Less than two decades later, all those predictions came true. The whole of Persia and many parts of Byzantium were conquered by Muslim armies under the command of invincible generals such as Khalid ibn Walid and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. The conquest of Byzantium, also predicted by God's Messenger, was achieved by the Ottoman ruler, Sultan Mehmed, the Conqueror.

7. The Messenger foretold the future victories of Islam

'Adiy ibn Khatam reports:

> One day people complained, in the presence of God's Messenger, about poverty, deprivation and the insecurity of desert roads. To such complaints, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, responded with glad tidings of a happy future, saying:
>
> > A day will come when a woman will travel alone on her camel from Hira to the Ka'ba with fear of nothing but God alone. Again, a day will come and the treasures of Chosroes (the Persian ruler) will be distributed amongst you. And again, another day will come and people will travel around to find someone to pay the prescribed alms to but in vain.
>
> When God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, made these predictions, the robbers from the tribe of Tayy used to attack travellers and the Persian Empire was living its most splendid days. But I have personally witnessed the first two predictions come true, and I am expecting the third will also prove to be true.

'Adiy ibn Khatam did not live long enough to see the third prediction come true. However, soon after his death, during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, people became so rich that no one could be found to give the prescribed alms to in the vast lands of the Muslim state. Living standards were very high and there was not any discernible imbalance in the distribution of wealth.

8. The Messenger foretold the martyrdom of 'Ammar

While the Prophet's Mosque was being built in Madina, everybody, including God's Messenger, tried their hardest to complete it as quickly as possible. Some cast sun-dried bricks, and the others carried them to the place of construction. Meanwhile, 'Ammar ibn Yasir, who was among the first to embrace Islam, approached God's Messenger and, probably in order to attract his love and affection, said: 'O God's Messenger, they loaded on me two sun-dried bricks.'

God's Messenger smiled and, while rubbing off the dust on 'Ammar's face with his blessed hand, gave him the tiding of his martyrdom, saying, *What a pity (Glad tidings for you, according to another version), O 'Ammar, a rebellious group will kill you*!

'Ammar was martyred about forty years later by the followers of Mu'awiya in the Battle of Siffin to confirm the Messenger's prediction. This event, like the others, demonstrates that the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, did not speak on his own, but that he was taught by God.

9. The Messenger predicted the appearance of the Kharijites

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was distributing the spoils of a war, when a man with Mongolian features voiced an objection, saying, 'Be just in distribution!' To this impertinence, God's Messenger gave the response, *Who else will show justice if I am not just? If I do not show justice, then I have been lost and brought to nought*. According to another version, he said: *If I am not just, then, (by following me) you – the people – have been*

lost and brought to nought.

‘Umar became furious with the impertinence of the man and told God’s Messenger, ‘Let me cut off the head of this hypocrite!’ But the Messenger did not allow him to do so, and said:

> In the future there will appear a group of people with chubby faces, slanting eyes and flat noses [of the same type as that impertinent man]. They will recite so much of the Qur’an that, when compared to their recitation, you will regard yours to be too little. Nevertheless, what they recite will not have the slightest affect on them. They will leave the religion in the manner of an arrow being shot from the bow. There will, moreover, be a large fatty growth on the arm of one of them.

Years passed, and the group, called the Kharijites, that bore the characteristics described by God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, were put to the sword by the Caliph ‘Ali in Nahrawan. Having based themselves on the misinterpretation of the Qur’an, they had rebelled against him. The dead body of a man just as described by God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and who had a fatty growth on his arm was taken to ‘Ali. This event, besides proving the truthfulness and Messengership of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, demonstrated the truth of another prediction of God’s Messenger, namely,

> O ‘Ali, I have fought for the sending down of the Qur’an; you will fight against its misinterpretation.

10. The Messenger foretold the conquest of Cyprus

One day God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, slept in the house of Umm Haram, his foster aunt. He woke up with a smile on his lips. When asked by Umm Haram about the reason for his smile, he answered: *I have dreamt about a group from my nation, who, like kings seated on thrones, boarded ships and were going to war*. Umm Haram requested him to pray for her to be included among them. *You will be among them*, he declared.

Years passed. During the caliphate of Mu‘awiya, Muslims waged war upon Cyprus. Umm Haram was in the army accompanying her husband, ‘Ubada ibn Samit. She died there and her tomb has been visited ever since.

As with all the other predictions of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, this one too, leads us to confirm his Prophethood and say: ‘O God’s Messenger, surely you told the truth!’

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EXAMPLES OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S PREDICTIONS RELATED TO THE DISTANT FUTURE

1. The Messenger predicted the appearance of the Mongols

Once God's Messenger declared: *When the end of time [the Last Day] approaches, the children of Kantura will appear; they will be slant-eyed, chubby-faced and flat-nosed.*

This description fits well the Mongols, as it does some of the Kharijites, whom it is traditionally thought to refer to. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, predicted, in fact, both the Mongol invasion and the destruction of the Muslim world, and the Western massacre of the Andalusian Muslims – two of the most tragic calamities to afflict the Muslim nation. Since he was concerned with the fate of his nation to the utmost degree, he drew, through such predictions, the attention of Muslims to the fact that when they deviate from the Straight Path, they will inevitably be struck by calamities. God uses wrong-doers and oppressors as a 'sword' to chasten and correct his believing servants, and afterwards He turns against the oppressors and eradicates them.

2. The Messenger predicted the conquest of Istanbul

God's Messenger also gave the glad tidings of the conquest of Istanbul, saying: *Certainly, Constantinople will be conquered. How good is the commander who will conquer it and how good his army*!

Hoping to be the object of the Prophet's praise, Muslim rulers and commanders, from the time of Mu'awiya, attempted many times to conquer Constantinople (Istanbul). It was in one of those campaigns that Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, the noble Companion of God's Messenger, was martyred and buried in the vicinity of the city walls.

Istanbul was conquered by the Ottoman ruler, Mehmed, the Conqueror. Besides this great commander and statesman, his two school friends, Hasan of Ulubat and Qadi Khidr Calabi, as well as his tutor Ak Shamsaddin, were also symbols of this conquest, one in the army, the others in the departments of religious and scientific education. The prayer and praise of God's Messenger encompasses all of them.

3. The Messenger predicted the reasons of the decline of Muslim nations

God's Messenger predicted and explained the principle reasons for the destruction of the Ottoman State and the condition of the Muslim world in the aftermath of the First World War, saying:

> Nations will call each other, as people make invitations to a meal, to make a concerted attack on you. Someone asked: 'Will this happen because of our being small in number?' God's Messenger answered: 'Rather, you will then be great in number, but as powerless as woodchips or straw carried in a flood. God will remove fear of you from the hearts of your enemies and implant in you fear of death and love of the world.'

This hadith warns us that a day will come when the world nations will flock upon us as if for dividing food at a table. This will happen because the Muslims will be, rather than like a deep-rooted tree, like woodchips or straw carried away by a flood.

The prediction, which became reality during the First World War, also describes our current situation. We have been divided into many factions while our enemies have formed a unity based on their interests. In the past, they were afraid of us because for us the grave was like a bridal chamber — something to be looked forward to. But now, we have become so attached to this temporal world that we try to escape death despite knowing that it will grasp us at its

appointed time.

We have been the object of many treacheries during our history. ‘Uthman and ‘Ali, in the early period of Islam, were victims of a treacherous group. And the magnificent Ottoman State was made sacrificial food for the carnivorous peoples of the world as a result of the endless betrayals of nations that had lived the most prosperous periods of their history peacefully under its administration.

4. The Messenger predicted the rise of Communism

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, also predicted the rise of Communism in a hadith reported by Ibn ‘Umar. Facing toward the east, he said, *Take care! Anarchy and subversion will appear from that direction, from where the age of Satan will begin*.

The age of Satan is the opposite of the age of the Prophet. Contrary to the age of the Prophet, being based on belief in, and devotion to, God, the age of Satan will be built upon atheism and hedonism, fostered by Satan. Since Communism, being the unlawful outcome of capitalism, champions hostility to religion, piety, and to all the moral and traditional values, God’s Messenger called the epoch when it would have momentum the age of Satan, and warned his nation of the mischief which it would bring.

In another hadith, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, foretold the conditions in which Communism would rise and foretold it as "red wind".

5. The Messenger foretold that the Euphrates would "dry"

God’s Messenger once declared:

> The Euphrates will probably go dry, uncovering a treasure (a mountain, according to another version) of gold beneath it. Whoever of you witnesses it, should refrain from taking any of it.

This hadith alludes to great bloodshed which is expected to take place along the Euphrates. Although the Euphrates has so far witnessed many wars, like the Iran-Iraq war, what this hadith points to is a much greater bloodshed which will occur in the future. While we may take the hadith in its literal meaning — that is, the Euphrates may actually go dry to uncover a treasure or a mountain of gold beneath it — we may also regard it in a figurative sense. For example, we tend to call petrol ‘black gold’, or the water of the Euphrates may be, in the future, as valuable as gold, and cause regional or even international wars. Also it may be that the income obtained through the dams over the Euphrates will attract international attention and cause great wars. In whichever case, God’s Messenger warned fourteen centuries ago that the region of the Euphrates is like dynamite at the heart of the Muslim world.

6. The Messenger foretold the agreement or reconciliation between Islam and Chrisitanity

God’s Messenger, who is the Prince of both worlds, also averred that Christianity would be purified of the pagan elements which have filtered over time into its body and join Islam, thus giving strength to the Divine religion. This will be a universal turning point in human history, and the believers will, at a time when they are gripped by their enemies, defeat and destroy the world-wide representatives of unbelief.

7. The Messenger predicted the developments in gene technology

God’s Messenger predicted that, through the reformations in agriculture and developments in science and technology, a pomegranate will suffice for as many as twenty people, with its rind providing shade for man. He also prophesied

that the wheat produced in so small an area as a house balcony will be enough for the annual consumption of a family.

These predictions will also prove to be true and mankind will thereby confirm once again that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

8. The Messenger predicted the undesired developments before the end of time

In another Tradition, God's Messenger upon him be peace and blessings, describes 'the end of time', saying:

> Prior to Doomsday, people will make discrimination when offering their greetings (preferring to greet only some); trade will be given so much currency and preference that a wife will help her husband in it; parents and relatives will no longer be visited; false evidence and false testimony will replace true ones, and writing will gain prominence.

Everything predicted in this hadith fourteen centuries ago, has proved to be true. Today, trade is the most preferred way of making a livelihood and women are exploited in it as a means of advertisement and for attracting customers. Secondly, the rights of parents and relatives are no longer considered and, once they become old – when they are most in need of attention and affection – they are often driven from their family homes to old people‘s homes. Thirdly, the power of the the modern press is unquestionable and thousands of books are published every day. Fourthly, lying is so widespread that few can refrain from it. This is true at all levels from business lies to false testimony in law suits.

All these predictions, together with the ones that have already come true or are certain to come true in due time, demonstrate that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, who articulated what was revealed to him.

9. The Messenger predicted the world-wide dissemination of knowledge

In a *hadith qudsi*, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, relates from God:

> At the end of time I will cause knowledge to be obtained by everyone, including men and women, slaves and the free, and the old and the young.

As we all know, education is now open to almost everyone through numerous institutions including schools, universities, and the media. Many intellectuals and scientists say that the next age will be the age of information. This is another proof of the truthfulness and, by implication, the Prophethood of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

10. The Messenger predicted the weakening of Islam in minds and hearts

In another authentic Tradition, God's Messenger declares:

> The Hour (the Last Day) will not come until God's Book (the Qur'an) is a means of shame and Islam is left without a powerful group to support it.

We have seen the truth of this prediction. For nearly a century, Muslims have been persecuted even in their own lands, and, while atheists and unbelievers have openly declared their unbelief everywhere, Islam has been the target of verbal, written and, even, active assaults. Muslims have felt compelled to conceal their belief and have become too ashamed to openly declare their confirmation of the Qur'an.

11. The Messenger predicted the gigantic developments in tele-communication and transportation

The hadith continues:

> The Hour will not come until the distances of time and space diminish.

I have translated the word *taqarub* as diminishing. It means ‘to approach each other’ and implies that before the Day of Judgement comes, things which took a long time in the past will be possible in a very short time. This hadith, in addition to predicting modern vehicles of transportation and developments in tele-communication, implies that time is relative.

The earth is gradually taking an elliptical strap. This may possibly cause some changes in the division and calculation of time.

As for the relativity of time alluded to in the hadith: as is known, time differs in some aspects such as division, length, calculation and the speed of its passage in or around every sphere or planet. If, therefore, one day, mankind are able to get out of the solar system, the present conception of time will completely change. Thus, in a single word, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, besides making several predictions, some of which have already come true, alludes to several scientific facts.

I wonder how anybody can come forward, in the face of these predictions, and claim that the one who made them is an ordinary man. Whoever else, other than the One who has absolute disposal of time and space, can know all these facts, and who can dispute the Prophethood of the one who foretold them fourteen centuries ago?

12. The Messenger predicted that usury would have a central place in world economies

God’s Messenger also predicted:

> A time will come upon people when almost everyone will eat from usury, to the extent that those who refrain from it will be exposed to its ‘dust’.

God’s Messenger points to two important facts:

a) A time will come when all formal transactions will involve interest. No one will be able to avoid it completely. However, those who do not enter into interest-based transactions will not be held accountable for the interest they eat unintentionally so long as they do their best to refrain from usury.

b) God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, may have meant by ‘being exposed to its dust’ that a ‘capitalist’ class would emerge and increase its wealth through interest. This would gradually lead the ‘working class’ into deeper and deeper poverty, which would result in direct and bitter class warfare.

It goes without saying that all these predictions have come true. How tragic it is that Muslim countries are in such a despised, degenerate state because of, among other things, their drowning in the swamp of interest, while the Qur’an has clearly declared that anyone involved in interest-based transactions was at war with God and His Messenger (*al-Baqara*, 2.279). If only Muslims had been conscious of such Qur’anic threats, they would not be in such a miserable position.

13. The Messenger predicted the pitiable conditions of Muslims

In the following authentic Tradition, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, points to another aspect of the present world:

> A time will come upon people when believers conceal themselves as hypocrites do among you today.

At the time of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, hypocrites used to conceal themselves. Inwardly they were unbelievers but outwardly they performed all the religious duties. God's Messenger foretold the pitiful state of Muslims when they would conceal their belief and perform even their religious obligations secretly.

The same state was described in another hadith:

Sedition and deviation will occur, and a Muslim will be disgraced because of performing prescribed prayers as a woman is disgraced today because of fornication.

14. The Messenger predicted the discovery of petroleum in Iran

In another narration, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, predicted that petroleum would be discovered in Taleqan, saying:

> Good tidings to Taleqan, for there are God's treasuries there, but not of gold and silver.

In the past, people meant by 'treasury' gold and silver. For this reason, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, emphasized that the treasuries which would be discovered in Taleqan would not be those of gold and silver. What comes to mind first today when told of a treasury which is not of gold and silver is petroleum. However, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, might also have implied resources of uranium or diamond. In which case, the Prophetic prediction has, again, come true because those resources have already been discovered in and around Taleqan.

15. The Messenger foretold the imitation of Christians and Jews by Muslims

The following is another prediction by God's Messenger, which has come true:

> You will certainly walk in the footsteps of those who preceded you so closely that if, for example, they had put their heads in the hole of a lizard, you would do the same.

The Companions asked him if he meant by 'those who preceded you' the Jews and Christians, he answered:

Who else could it be other than them?

Muslims have been suffering from an identity crisis for two centuries. They are blind imitators of the West and have been caught up in the vices which destroyed all previous civilizations.

All the foregoing together with hundreds of other predictions constitute a decisive proof that Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was a Prophet, a Messenger, taught by God.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

EXAMPLE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S PREDICTIONS CONCERNING SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENTS

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, also made many predictions concerning developments in various branches of science. Some of these predictions have already come true, and the others will also happen exactly as foretold by the holy Prophet, whose Prophethood will thus be confirmed once more.

Out of the many examples, I will cite only a few to illustrate that the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was also accurate in his predictions concerning scientific developments.

1. The Messenger predicted that a cure would be found for every illness

As related by Bukhari, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared:

> God did not send down an illness for which He did not send a cure.

This hadith, in addition to declaring that every illness is curable, is the most comprehensive statement encouraging research in the field of medicine. In another Tradition, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, pronounces that there is a cure for every illness. Another version tells us:

> Do not neglect having your diseases treated, for God does not send a disease for which He will not send a cure except for old age.

Mankind may discover a cure for every illness, but they will never be able to stop man's journeying from the world of spirits to the material world and then on to either Paradise or Hell through the stations of embryo, babyhood, childhood, youth, old age, the grave, and the Resurrection. The 'Prince of the two worlds', upon him be peace and blessings, thus, on the one hand, encourages mankind to undertake every kind of research possible to find cures for illnesses, he also warns them, on the other hand, not to neglect preparing for the next world.

God Almighty encourages mankind to strive in the development of sciences by presenting in the Qur'an the miracles of the earlier Prophets to their attention and thereby showing the limits to which they should aspire. By allowing the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, as an inimitable miracle, to bring the dead back to life, He points out that mankind will be able to find a cure for every illness but that death will inevitably catch hold of them. In the story of Prophet Moses' staff, the Qur'an tells mankind that they can, and will be able to, employ inanimate things in different ways like obtaining water from the depths of the earth by using devices as simple as a staff, like a centrifuge, but they will never be able to cause a rock to flow abundant water by striking it with a staff, or to change a staff into a snake, both of which the Prophet Moses did.

The Qur'an, being the greatest miracle of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, marks the farthest limit in literary style and eloquence and implies that writing and eloquence will have the greatest importance towards the end of time. However, mankind will never be able to match the eloquence of the Qur'an.

The Prophets set examples and showed us the limits to which we may go in material as well as spiritual progress.

2. The Messenger advised quarantine

We can trace the principle of quarantine to God's Messenger, who said:

> If you hear that there is pestilence in a place, do not enter it; if the pestilence breaks out where you are,

> do not leave it to escape the pestilence.

According to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, he also declared:

Keep away from the leper as you do from a lion.

In this hadith, God's Messenger advises us to fight with leprosy and to search for the ways to be protected against it. Quarantine is again suggested here as a way to prevent the spread of leprosy.

3. The Messenger warned against bacteria

Imam Muslim narrates in his *Sahih* that God's Messenger declared:

> When a dog has licked a bowl of yours, clean it seven times, first time with earth, the other six with water.

This hadith contains the following medical principles:

a) Dogs may be carrying the microbes of certain diseases possibly communicable to human beings, a fact which has only recently been discovered.

b) The saliva of dogs, like their excrement, may contain subtances greatly injurious to man's health.

c) At the time of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, neither disinfection nor sterilization was known. Nevertheless, God's Messenger, being a Prophet taught by the All-Knowing, recommends earth to clean a bowl licked by a dog. We know today that earth is a good antiseptic containing substances like tetracycline.

4. The Messenger warned against the destruction of the ecological balance of the world

In another hadith concerning dogs, God's Messenger expresses a fundamental principle of ecology, saying,

If dogs were not a separate community, I would order their killing.

This implies that every species in the creation is an indispensable element of ecological balance. Except that dogs, as a community, have a part in this balance, it would be better that they be removed from the surface of the earth, for they carry germs harmful to man's health.

All of the facts expressed in the hadith are of the kind recently discovered by science.

5. The Messenger encouraged washing the hands before and after eating and after waking up

As recorded by *Sahih al-Tirmidhi* and *Sunan Abu Dawud*, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declares:

The blessings of food lie in washing hands before and after eating.

In this hadith, God's Messenger emphasizes the importance of cleanliness. As we use our hands, germs accumulate. Only by washing hands can they be removed.

In another hadith, God’s Messenger advises us to wash our hands after we wake up since You do not know, he says, where your hands have moved in sleep.

No one in the time of God’s Messenger knew about microbes, the existence of which would be discovered centuries later. Besides, God’s Messenger was unlettered. If he taught, as he did, in spite of that, about cleaning hands before and after eating, and after waking up, he must certainly be a Prophet instructed by the Greatest Teacher.

6. The Messenger insisted on dental care

As recorded in all of the six of the most authentic books of Tradition from as many as forty Companions, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, established the principle of dental care, saying,

> If it did not place an excessive burden upon my community, I would command them to clean their teeth with *miswak* [a tooth stick] before each of the five daily prayers.

Cleaning of teeth is of great significance for both dental care and the health of the whole body. Despite this, even dentists do not brush their teeth five times a day, but God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, urged his community to clean their teeth before every prayer. This was a practice of God’s Messenger himself and is thereby a Sunna, a strong Prophetic recommendation, for all Muslims.

7. The Messenger warned against overeating, oversleeping and having large paunch

In relation to health and digestion, God’s Messenger recommended:

> In eating, apportion a third of your stomach to food, another third to water, and leave the last third empty. The bowl most distasteful to God is a full stomach.

In another similar hadith, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, also says:

> What I fear concerning my community is a large paunch, oversleep, idleness and the lack of certainty.

All of the points mentioned in the hadith are each an antecedent to or result of the other. A man who spends an idle life of heedlessness with no self-control and self-criticism is apt to get a paunch, which, in turn, causes him to eat more and more. A full belly naturally causes excessive sleeping. Lastly, the one who is addicted to overeating and excessive sleeping will never be able to acquire certainty and deep conviction about the principles of faith. This is the case with most people in today’s world, a fact that provides another decisive proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

8. The Messenger advised kohl for eyes

Another Tradition concerning health is as follows:

Treat your eyes with kohl, for it nourishes eyes and eyelashes.

Many medical authorities state that kohl is useful for the nourishment of eyes and eyelashes.

Another substance, recommended by the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and useful for health as an antibiotic and for its dermatological effect, is henna. Henna is better and more effective as an antiseptic and as a sterilizing agent than substances like tincture of iodine.

9. The Messenger advised black cumin

Bukhari relates from Abu Hurayra that once God's Messenger said:

> There is in this black seed [black cumin] a cure for every illness except death.

This hadith contains many truths concerning therapy. A patient needs, particularly during the time of convalescence, foods rich in proteins, calories, and vitamins, and which are easily digestible. Scientific investigations have recently shown that all these properties are found in black cumin, a fact which shows that Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was a Prophet taught by the All-Knowing.

10. The Messenger warned against the falling of flies into bowls

Bukhari relates from God's Messenger:

> When a fly falls into the bowl of somebody among you, he should dip it completely in the food before taking it out. For there is disease in one of the fly's wings and cure in the other.

This hadith contains proof for the Prophethood of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. For, first of all, no one at the time of the Prophet knew that flies carry microbes. Second, when a fly drops in a bowl, it tries to hold one of its wings off the food, so that it can take off again. In which case, it leaves in the food the bacteria it carries in its wing. But, when it is submerged in the food with a slight touch, the tiny bag on the other wing bursts open to scatter the anti-bacteria to kill the germs it has already left. This is one of the latest discoveries in medicine.

11. The Messenger distinguished between menstrual blood and haemorrhage

As related by ‘A’isha, Mother of the Believers, once a woman named Fatima, the daughter of Abu Khubash, came to God's Messenger and said:

— O God's Messenger, my blood does not stop; shall I abandon the prescribed prayers?

— *No, you must not, for it is not the menstrual blood, it is a haemorrhage*, God's Messenger replied.

Except by Prophethood, how could Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, have distinguished between a normal haemorrhage and menstrual blood, and how could he have known that menstrual bleeding is a kind of haemorrhage?

12. The Prophet banned alcohol for treatment

Tariq ibn Suwayd narrates:

I used to suffer from an illness, and I took alcohol for a remedy. When alcohol was banned, I went to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and asked him whether I would be allowed to continue taking alcohol.

No, for it is not a remedy, rather it is the disease itself, God's Messenger declared.

Scientists all agree that even a single drop of alcohol is harmful to man's physical and spiritual health.

13. The Messenger ordered circumcision

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, once proclaimed that ten things are intrinsically necessary for men and therefore ordered by the Prophets. Circumcision is one of them.

Today, scientists admit that the loose fold of the skin at the end of the male sex organ is exposed and susceptible to infections and even to cancer. Therefore, millions of people are circumcised in Europe and America.

We are convinced that the West will one day acknowledge the truth of Islam, and the prediction made at the beginning of this century by Said Nursi will also come true:

> The Ottoman State is pregnant with a Western one, as the West with an Islamic. Both will give birth to what they are pregnant with.

We have so far tried to explain the truthfulness of the Prophets, emphasizing the truthfulness of God's Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. As reiterated several times, they never lied, to the extent that all their predictions either have come true or will do so in due course. They came to guide men to the Straight Path and lead them to Paradise. Had they displayed a single trace of dishonesty, they would have guided no one to the truth. However, their truthfulness, especially the truthfulness of the Last Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings, will be manifested as brightly as the sun in the Hereafter, where people will see everything clearly, and all the tidings they gave concerning the next life, the Resurrection, the Place of Gathering, the Final Reckoning, the Bridge, Paradise and Hell will be realized.

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PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

TRUSTWORTHINESS

The second attribute of Prophethood is *amanah*, an Arabic word which means ‘trustworthiness’. It is derived from the same root as the word *mu’min*, believer. Being a believer implies being ‘a trustworthy person‘. The Prophets, upon them all be peace, were foremost in belief and therefore at the summit of trustworthiness. To stress this principle, God summarizes the stories of five Prophets using the same words:

> The people of Noah denied the Messengers. When their brother Noah said to them: ‘Will you not fear God and avoid evil? I am a trustworthy Messenger to you?’ (*al-Shu‘ara’*, 26.105–107)

In summary of the other stories, the names Hud, Lot, Shu‘ayb and Salih replace the name Noah. These are just a few of the many verses emphasizing the trustworthiness of the Prophets.

It should be noted that *mu’min*, trustworthy, is one of the Divine Names. God is the ultimate Mu’min, because He is the source of security and reliability. We put our trust in, confide in, and rely upon, Him. He distinguished the Prophets by their trustworthiness. Our connection to Him is through the Prophets and is based entirely on their trustworthiness and reliability.

As trustworthiness is a most important attribute of Prophethood, it is also an essential quality of the Archangel Gabriel. The Qur’an describes Gabriel as one obeyed and trustworthy (*al-Ta kwir*, 81.21). We received the Qur’an through two trustworthy Messengers, Gabriel and the Prophet Muhammad. Gabriel conveyed it to Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and the latter communicated it to us.

The trustworthiness of God’s Messenger

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, was trustworthy to the utmost degree in his mission as a Prophet and in his general behaviour towards God‘s creatures. As he did not show any disloyalty to his cause, neither did he cheat anybody in his life.

The Prophet’s trustworthiness concerning his mission

The Messenger was chosen by God for his trustworthiness so that he would be totally devoted to delivering the Message truthfully. He was so concerned about his duty that he used to repeat the verses while Gabriel was reciting them to him until God revealed:

> Move not your tongue concerning (the Qur’an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it, to establish it in your heart and enable you to recite it. So, when We have recited it to you, then follow you its recital. Then it is also for Us to make it clear to you. (*al-Qiyama*, 75.16—9)

As the Qur’an was given to him as a trust, he did his utmost to convey it to people in the best way possible. He dedicated his life to this sacred cause, constantly aware of the weight of his responsibility. In the last year of his life, he made his farewell pilgrimage, during which he gave a sermon on the hill of ‘Arafat. He communicated to people the Commandments of God once more and at the end of each sentence, he told the pilgrims, *They will, in the near future, inquire of you about me*, and asked them: *Have I conveyed the Message to you*? Each time the Muslims answered, ‘Yes, you have conveyed’, he repeated, *O God, be the witness*!

Specific events demonstrating the Messenger’s trustworthiness

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never thought of concealing even a word of the Divine Revelation. We read in the Qur'an that God admonished him mildly for a few actions of his. Were he not the Messenger of God and — God forbid the thought! — were he the author of the Qur'an, there would have been no such admonition in it.

The society in which the Messenger was raised was a primitive one. Many of the prevalent customs contradicted reason and sociological and scientific facts. For example, adopted children enjoyed the same legal status as natural children and it followed that a man could not legally marry, for example, the widow or former wife of an adopted son. This practice was to be abolished, as adoption can never create a relationship comparable to the relationship with biological parents. God chose to solve this problem, as always, through the ideal example of His Messenger in order to separate a 'legal' fiction from a natural reality, and established a new law and custom.

Zayd, who was an emancipated slave and servant of God's Messenger whom he addressed as 'my son', had married Zaynab, the daughter of Jahsh. It was God's Messenger himself, upon him be peace and blessings, who had arranged this marriage. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that the marriage would not last long. Zayd admitted that he was spiritually inferior to his wife. He concluded that it was better for him to divorce her. In the end, the Qur'an commanded Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings:

We gave her in marriage to you (*al-Ahzab*, 33.37).

The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, was obliged by this Divine command to marry her. This was, of course, against the established traditions of the time, and was difficult for God's Messenger to carry out, as the hypocrites would use this opportunity to defame him, so he delayed announcing the Divine decree, for which he received the following admonition:

Then, you said to him on whom God bestowed grace and you have done favour, '*Keep your wife to yourself and fear God*'. *But you did hide in your heart that which God was about to make manifest because you feared the people [that they would speak slander against you], whereas God had a better right that you should fear him*. (*al-Ahzab*, 33.37)

'A'isha, Mother of Believers, later commented on the event:

> If God's Messenger had been willing to conceal any Revelation, he would have concealed that verse.

If Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, had not been a trustworthy Messenger, he would, as 'A'isha rightly said, have concealed that verse. However, concealing it would have been contrary to his character and mission. Furthermore, the verse 67 of *surah al-Ma'ida* contains a clear, decisive order for the Prophet not to conceal anything of the Qur'an, for concealment of even a single Revelation would amount to mean that he did not deliver his Message. The verse reads:

> O Messenger, deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; for if you do not, you will not have fulfilled your task of HisMessengership. God will protect you from men. God guides not the people of the unbelievers.

So, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, communicated to people whatever was revealed to Him by God.

The Prophet's trustworthiness in his relations with creatures

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was trustworthy and encouraged trustworthiness. Once, during the last ten days of the month of Ramadan, his wife Safiyya visited him while he confined himself in mosque for constant prayer. As he escorted her home, two of his Companions happened to pass by. The Messenger stopped them and, unveiling the face of his wife Safiyya, said to them, Look, this is my wife, Safiyya!

They said: 'God forbid any evil thought about you, O Messenger of God!' The Messenger had wanted to warn them against any evil suspicion about him, which might cause them to lose their faith and thereby condemn them to eternal Hellfire. He gave them and us a lesson, saying, Satan continuously circulates within man in his blood vessels.

God's Messenger was an embodiment of trustworthiness

God's Messenger was an embodiment of trustworthiness. The Makkans called him 'the Trustworthy One.' Even after the declaration of his Prophethood, they continued to entrust their precious goods to him although they regarded him as an enemy.

He warned his people against lying, breaking one's word and breach of trust. Like breaching a trust and breaking one's word, lying was also, in his words, 'a sign of hypocrisy'. He was so meticulous in this matter that once he saw a woman call her child saying, 'Come on, I'll give you something!' He asked her whether she would really give the child something. When the woman replied that she would give him a date, God's Messenger warned: *If you were not to give something, that would be a lie*!

He was not only against deceiving humans, but even warned people against deceiving animals. Once, annoyed at seeing one of his Companions call his horse using deception, he said:

> You should give up deceiving animals. You should be trustworthy even in your treatment of them!

PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF THE MESSENGER'S AND HIS FOLLOWERS' TRUSTWORTHINESS

Once, on the way home from a military campaign, a few Companions took the chicks of a bird from the nest to pet them. The mother-bird returned after a short while and on finding the chicks gone, began to fly around in distress. When God's Messenger was informed of this, he was so grieved that he ordered the chicks to be returned immediately. By this he demonstrated that it was not befitting for those who should be representatives of trustworthiness to hurt any living creatures.

His Companions, those of the generation of Islam who imbibed his Message, were each an embodiment of trustworthiness. By virtue of this and other laudable virtues, cities and states were submitted to the Message they conveyed. During the caliphate of 'Umar, the embodiment of justice, Abu 'Ubayda was the commander of the Muslim armies in Syria. When the emperor of Byzantium set out to recapture Hims with a large army, Abu 'Ubayda decided to evacuate the city since there were only a handful of soldiers in his company. He gathered the people of Hims in the city quarter and announced:

> We collected the protection tax from you because we had to defend you. Now we are too weak to defend you against the assault of the emperor of Byzantium. In this case, we return the tax we collected.

All the taxes collected were returned to the non-Muslim people of Hims. Pleased with the Muslim administration, Christian priests and Jewish rabbis flocked to the churches and synagogues and prayed for God to grant the Muslims victory against the armies of the Byzantine emperor.

How did Muslims behave in the lands they conquered?

Such was the attitude of Muslim conquerors and administrators in the lands they ruled. Muslims stayed in Spain for eight centuries. If there were left in that land Christians in sufficient numbers and with sufficient power to recapture it after eight centuries, this was due to the religious tolerance of the Muslim administration. Muslim rulers, whether in Europe or Asia or Africa, did not interfere with the religion, language or native culture of the conquered peoples. If they had done so, there would have been no Christians or Jews left to recapture Spain or the Balkan countries or Palestine to carry out genocides therein, or to destroy peoples, cultures and languages almost all over the world.

Islam forbids ill-suspicion and backbiting

Islam emphasizes trustworthiness and security between people to the extent of condemning and forbidding suspicion and backbiting. The Qur'an declares:

> O you who believe! Avoid much of suspicion for suspicion in some cases is a grave sin. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it. And fear God, verily God is the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful. (*al-Hujurat*, 49.12)

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was so sensitive on this point that when once 'A'isha said of a woman, 'How long the neck of that woman is!', he commented:

You have backbitten against her and thereby eaten of her flesh!

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, always prayed to God as follows:

> O God! I seek refuge in You from hunger, for how bad a companion it is! I also seek refuge in You from

> betrayal, for what an evil confidant it is!

The following is also one of his severe admonitions against betrayal and disloyalty:

> When God gathers together on the Day of Judgement all the people preceding and to come, a banner will be raised on behalf of every man of disloyalty and it will be announced: This is because of the disloyalty of so and so!

The heart of God's Messenger was utterly closed to all kinds of evil, but open to all sorts of good. He lived in a climate of security, faithfulness and trustworthiness. He never cheated, lied, betrayed, spoke behind anyone's back or slandered anyone. He never harboured evil suspicion of anyone. In return, people relied on him, and confided in him. His enemies spoke all kinds of slander against him but no one ever accused him of lying and disloyalty. Those who turned their backs on him were deceived and dragged along into wrong ways.

The Messenger's utmost reliance on God

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was totally reliable. His trustworthiness had, in fact, two aspects: one in his relationship with people, the other in his relationship with God. While the former manifested itself as complete reliability, the latter was exhibited as his perfect reliance on God. When combined, these two aspects always bring about a peaceful atmosphere of steadfastness and security.

The Qur'an gives several examples concerning the Prophets' confidence in, and perfect reliance on, God. To cite only a few of them:

> And recite to them the news of Noah, when he said to his people: 'O my people! If my stay (with you) and my reminding (you) of the signs of God is unbearable to you, then I put my trust in God, so come together with your partners and come to an agreement on your plan! Then let not your affair be a worry to you, pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite. (*Yunus*, 10.71)

Abraham said to his people:

> I call God to witness and bear you witness that I am free from all that you ascribe as partners in worship to God, beside Him. So, plot against me, all of you, and give me no respite. I put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord. There's not a moving creature but He has grasp of its forelock. Verily my Lord is on a straight path.' (*Hud*, 11.54–6)

> Indeed there has been an excellent example for you in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: 'Verily we are free from you and from whatever you worship besides God; we have rejected you, and there has arisen between us and you hostility and hatred for ever, until you believe in God alone, – except Abraham's saying to his father: 'Verily I ask forgiveness (from God) for you, but I have no power to do anything for you before God. Our Lord! In you (alone) we put our trust, and to You (alone) we return in repentance, and to You (alone) is our final return.' (*al-Mumtahina*, 60.4)

The nature of unbelief consists in deviation and opposition. An unbeliever sees the world in darkness and feels himself alone in an alien world. Whereas, for a believer, the whole universe is a cradle of brotherhood. He feels himself connected to everything around him. By its nature, unbelief cuts off relations between things and, as a result, an unbeliever feels enmity against everything, especially against believers. He cannot bear their existence, so he tries his hardest to eradicate belief from the surface of the earth. That is why all the Prophets encountered severe opposition and, together with their followers, suffered pitiless acts of cruelty. But, it is due to their complete confidence in and perfect reliance on God that *they never lost heart because of what befell them in God's Way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor were they brought low* (Qur'an, *Al 'Imran*, 3.146).

The Messenger’s reliance on God made him fearless

The Messenger’s reliance on God made him fearless. He appeared in the heartland of a large desert where one of the most uncivilized peoples of the world lived, and, despite their harsh treatment – to the extent that even his uncle was one of his most bitter enemies – he challenged the whole world and, through complete trust in God, carried his mission to victory. He had only a handful of men and his victory came in a very short period. This is an unparalleled achievement in world history. We can understand his fearless nature, which developed out of his absolute confidence in God, through the following anecdotes.

As reported by his biographers, the tribe of the Quraysh conspired to kill him. They selected one man from each clan and, as a result, around two hundred men, under the command of Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab, besieged his house. God’s Messenger told ‘Ali, his cousin, to spend the night in his bed and, throwing some dust at those surrounding the house while reciting the verse, *We have put a barrier before them, and a barrier behind them, so We have covered them up, so that they cannot see* (*Ya Sin*, 36.9), he departed without being seen by anyone. He left Makka with his closest friend, Abu Bakr, and reached the cave of Thawr, which is at the top of a high, steep mountain. Meanwhile, the chiefs of the Quraysh had dispatched search parties to seize him. One of those search parties climbed the mountain up to the cave. Abu Bakr became anxious, fearing for the life of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, but the latter comforted him, saying, *Do not be anxious, for God is with us*, (*al-Tawba*, 9:39), and added: *What do you think of the two men beside whom God is the third*?

In the the Battle of Hunayn, the Muslim army was forced to retreat. All but a few thought they were about to lose. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, spurred on his horse forward and shouted:

I am a Prophet. This is not a lie! I am the son of ‘Abd al-Muttalib!

The Messenger’s courage and steadfastness coming from his reliance on God the Almighty

His courage and steadfastness were enough for his Companions to collect themselves and ultimately to gain the victory.

As related through various channels, during the military campaign of Ghatfan and Anmar, a courageous chieftain named Ghowras unexpectedly appeared at the side of God’s Messenger, who was lying under a tree. Ghowras unsheathed his sword and asked God’s Messenger, ‘Who will save you from me now?’

God will, the Messenger replied. He then prayed: *O God, suffice me against him in any way You will*!

At that moment, Ghowras was knocked down, and his sword slipped from his hand. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, took the sword and asked him: Now, who will save you from me?

Ghowras began to tremble and entreated God’s Messenger to spare his life. ‘You are a noble, forgiving man; only forgiveness is expected of you,’ he pleaded. God’s Messenger forgave him, and when Ghowras returned to his tribe, he said to them: ‘I have just come from the best of mankind.’

Trustworthiness is one of the cornerstones of belief. The Qur’an says:

> Verily, God commands you to commit the trusts to (the charge of) those qualified for them, and when you judge between men, to judge with justice. Verily how excellent is the teaching which He gives you! Truly God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. (*al-Nisa’*, 4.58)

Breach of trusts is a sign of the end of time

Breach of trusts is, according to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, a sign of the end of time. Once he said:

When the trust is breached, expect the end of time.

When his Companions asked how the trust would be breached, he answered:

> If a job or post is assigned to the one not qualified for it, then expect the end of time.

Assignment of a job or post to the one qualified to do it is a social trust and has a very significant role in public administration and social order. The abuse of this principle causes disorder in society. There should be order in all levels of society with some taking responsibility for others. God's Messenger declared:

> Each of you is a 'shepherd' [manager] and each of you is responsible for his flock. The ruler is a 'shepherd' responsible for his subjects. A husband is a 'shepherd' responsible for his family and a woman is a 'shepherd' and is responsible in the house of her husband. A servant is a 'shepherd' and is responsible for managing the duties or the property his master entrusted to him.

If everyone in a society from the doorman to the president is mindful about fulfilling his responsibilities, we will be living in a 'society of trustworthy ones', for which humankind express their longing in utopias.

The one who is not trustworthy is not a believer

Trustworthiness is so essential an aspect of belief that God's Messenger once declared:

The one who is not trustworthy is not a believer.

In another of his sayings, he describes a believer as the one whom the people trust concerning their blood and property.

He also said:

> Promise me the following six things and I will promise you Paradise: When you speak, speak the truth; when you give a promise, carry it out; when something is entrusted to you, do not breach it; always keep chaste without being involved in any illicit intercourse; keep your eyes away from what is unlawful and hold your hands back from the forbidden.

To look lustfully at a woman other than your wife is strictly forbidden by Islam. Concerning this, God's Messenger declares:

> God says: '[Such] a glance is like a poisonous arrow from the quiver of Satan. Whoever refrains out of fear of Me, I inculcate belief so firmly in his heart that he tastes it.'

To live in absolute security is only possible under the rule of trustworthy people. If the Muslim world observes the Divine Trust and becomes the representative of trustworthiness and security in the world, a 'new world order' based on justice and balance will be possible. Otherwise, mankind will continue to chase after 'mirages' of justice, security and happiness.

The Messenger's every word and deed pronounced that he is a Messenger of God

Through his truthfulness, trustworthiness and all other laudable virtues, God's Messenger imprinted an indelible mark upon peoples of every age. His every word and deed pronounced that Muhammad is a Messenger of God, one who was sent to guide people to truth, to bring them out of the darkness of ignorance, savagery, slavery and immorality, into the light of knowledge, high morality, love, compassion and true freedom.

One of Avicenna's students said to him one day that if, with his extraordinary understanding and intelligence, he were to make a claim to Prophethood, people would gather around him. Avicenna said nothing. Some time passed and they were on a journey together in wintertime. Avicenna awoke from his sleep one morning at dawn, wakened his student and, telling him he was thirsty, asked him to fetch some water. The student put him off and made excuses. However much Avicenna persisted, the student was not prepared to leave his warm bed in the cold winter. At that moment the cry of the *muezzin* called out from the minaret: *God is the Greatest... I bear witness that there is no deity but God. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God*... Avicenna saw that this was a good opportunity to give the answer to his student, so he said: 'You, who averred that if I made claim to be a Prophet, people would believe in me. Look now and see how the request I just made of you, who have been my student for years and have benefited from my lessons, has not even had the effect of making you leave your warm bed to fetch me some water. But this *muezzin* strictly obeys the four-hundred-year (now fourteen-hundred-year)-old command of the Prophet. He got up from his warm bed, as he always does every morning together with hundreds of thousands of others, climbed up to that great height and bore witness to the Unity of God and to the Messengership of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. Look, and think how great the difference is!'

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COMMUNICATION

The third attribute of Prophethood is communication of Islamic truths or, in other words, 'enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.'

Communication of Divine Message was the ultimate reason for the sending of the Prophets

We say 'Islamic truths' because every Prophet came with the same Divine Religion based on submission to God. Communication of this Message was the ultimate reason for sending the Prophets.

God manifested His Compassion and Munificence through the mission of the Prophets, which is itself the embodiment of Divine Compassion and Munificence.

Just as God shows us a manifestation of His Mercifulness through the warmth and light of the sun, He also manifested His Mercy and Compassion for humankind through His Prophets. He chose the Last Prophet, whom He sent as a mercy for all the worlds, as the one to establish the Message of compassion and mercy eternally. If he had not been sent to revive and revise the Messages of the previous Prophets in such a way as to encompass the whole of humankind, we would all be wandering around in the terrifying desert of unbelief, misguidance and ignorance.

Vital questions everyone asks himself

Philosophers, sociologists and psychologists have throughout history searched for answers to such vital questions as, 'Who am I?', 'Where have I come from?', 'What is my final destination?', 'What is the purpose of life?', 'What does our dying mean?', 'Is death absolute non-existence or only a door to a new, eternal life?' Man has tangled with such questions during his earthly existence and it is only through the enlightenment of the Prophets that he has found true satisfaction and peace of mind. Through them he has been convinced that this earthly life is just a 'way-station' on his perpetual journeying from the world of spirits to the world of eternity, and a field to be planted with seeds for harvesting in the eternal world that follows. This world is reached through the intermediate realm of the grave. With this realization, he has been relieved of his anxieties and the world has been transformed for him into a flowery garden of recreation and a gathering place of friends.

It is to convey this Message and to illuminate the path to happiness here and in the Hereafter that the Prophets were sent.

We will discuss three essential points in the way a Prophet conveys the Divine Message.

The Prophets made a comprehensive invitation to God

There was no fragmentation or compartmentalization in the way of the Prophets. They dealt with people and life in a holistic manner and never ignored or neglected any of man's faculties. They appealed to man's intellect, reason, spirit and all his outer and inner senses and feelings.

The position of a Prophet in relation to Divine Revelation is like that of a corpse in the hands of one who washes it. God directs and guides him in whatever fashion is required to lead his people. Without this Divine direction, he would not be able to guide anyone. Neglect of the intellect, for instance, would result in a community of poor, docile mystics. Negligence of the heart or spirit, on the other hand, would result in crude rationalism devoid of any spiritual dimension. Man comprises intellect, spirit and body and each must be assigned its due part of the Message. Also, man is an active being. Therefore, he should be led to activity according to the purpose of his life as determined by God and

communicated by the Prophets. God did not leave him to become a passive recluse, nor allow him to be an 'activist' without reason and spirit, or a 'rationalist' without spiritual reflection and activism. It is only when the intellect, spirit and body are harmonized, and man is motivated towards activity in the illuminated way of the Divine Message, that he can become a complete being and attain true humanity. This was the aim of the Prophets, upon them all be peace, and should be the aim of all those who wish to be their followers. The Qur'an declares:

> Say (O Muhammad): 'This is my way: I call (people) to God with wisdom and insight, I and those who follow me.' (*Yusuf*, 12.108)

The Prophets asked no wage from people

A Prophet does not live for himself. Dedicated to his mission wholly, a Prophet is an altruist and lives for the happiness and good of others. His happiness lies in seeing people devoted to God for ultimate salvation but he never expects from people anything in return for what he does; his reward is from none but God alone. This is a very important and indispensable aspect of a Prophet's communication of the Divine Message, one frequently emphasized in the Qur'an:

> O my people! I ask of you no wealth for it, my reward is from none but God. (*Hud*, 11.29)

The Prophets left the results to God

The Prophets were charged with conveying the Divine Message to people. They did their best to this end and patiently faced many misfortunes and even torment. They fulfilled their responsibilities without worrying about the result of their call to God. They knew with all certainty that it is only God who will bring about the desired result.

The three fundamentals briefly outlined above set the principles for everyone who wishes to take up the Divine responsibility to call to God in every subsequent age, in every place.

The method of conveying the Message

Constant, continual striving is not only an essential feature of the delivering of the Message but it is actually an important element of the Prophetic method.

A Prophet is, so to speak, obsessed with how he is to perform his duty. To this end, he considers all the circumstances and does everything permitted, without concerning himself with God's domain, never worrying about the results. He knows that it is not in his power to make anyone accept the Message, that his duty is only to convey the Message and to do everything possible and permissible by God so that people become convinced of its truth. On this point, the Qur'an declares:

> Verily, you [O Muhammad] guide not whom you like but God guides whom He wills. And He knows best those who receive guidance. (*al-Qasas*, 28.56)

Many Prophets lived with no one accepting their Message. However, they did not lose heart, weaken in resolve, or resort to means not permitted by God, like violence, terror or deception, despite having to suffer every kind of hardship and tortures of the most pitiless sort. When the Last Prophet – Muhammad – upon him be peace and blessings, was severely wounded in the Battle of Uhud, some of his Companions requested him to invoke God's curse on the enemy, but he prayed for them instead, saying:

'O God, forgive my people, because they do not know.'

> O God, forgive my people and guide them to truth, because they do not know.

He made this supplication with his face bleeding profusely, since he had once said:

> I am now as if I was seeing a Prophet who, while his face was bleeding prayed for his people: 'O God, forgive my people, because they do not know.'

All the Prophets reacted in the same way to the torments and false accusations they suffered from their people. For example:

> The leaders of the people of Noah said: 'Verily, we see you in clear deviation.' He said: 'O my people! There is no deviation in me, but I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds! I convey unto you the messages of my Lord and give sincere advice to you. And I know from God what you know not.' (*al-A'raf*, 7.60–2)

> The leaders of Hud's people, who were unbelievers, said: 'We see you surely in foolishness; and we think you are among the liars.' He said: 'O my people! There is no foolishness in me, but I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds. I convey unto you the messages of my Lord and I am a trustworthy adviser to you'. (*al-A'raf*, 7.66–8)

The Prophets conveyed the messages of their Lord without thinking of any return other than God's pleasure

Nothing changed during the history of Prophethood. The Prophets conveyed the messages of their Lord without thinking of any return other than God's pleasure. There is no people to whom a Messenger was not sent, as expilicitly affirmed in the Qur'an:

> Whoever goes right, then he goes right only for his own soul's benefit. And whoever goes astray, then he goes astray only to his own loss. No laden soul can bear another's load. And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger. (*al-Isra'*, 17.15)

> And verily We have sent among every people a Messenger (saying): 'Worship God (alone), and shun all false deities'. (*al-Nahl*, 16.36)

After he received the first Revelation in the cave, Hira, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, returned home in a great excitement. Wrapped up in his vestment, God ordered him:

> O you who wrapped up in your vestment, arise and give warning! Magnify your Lord! Cleanse your garments, and keep away from all pollution. Do not show favour, seeking worldly gain! Be patient for the sake of your Lord! (*al-Muddaththir*, 74.1-7)

Again, he received the following order:

> O you folded in garments! Keep vigil the night long, except a little; half of it, or a little less, or a little more, and recite the Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tones. We are about to address to you words of great gravity. (*al-Muzzammil*, 73.1-5)

Every Prophet conveyed God's Message to his people without becoming wearied or daunted

Every Prophet conveyed God's Message to his people without becoming wearied or daunted. The harsh reactions of

people could not hinder a Prophet from his duty. For example,

> [Noah] said: ‘O my Lord! Day and night I have called my people. But my call has only added to their aversion. Each time I call on them to seek Your pardon, they thrust their fingers in their ears and cover themselves with their garments, persisting in sin and magnifying themselves in insolent pride. Further, I have called to them aloud. Further, I have spoken to them in public and in private, saying: "Ask forgiveness from your Lord: for He is Oft-Forgiving."’ (*Nuh*, 71.5-10)

When a people rejected the call of a Prophet and persisted in unbelief and corruption on earth, God’s wrath usually fell upon them. We read in the Qur’an the story of several devastated peoples, and we see their ruins all over the world.

THE CONSISTENT EFFORT OF GOD'S MESSENGER IN CONVEYING THE MESSAGE

The communication of the Divine Message was the most essential characteristic of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. We are troubled whenever we are hungry or thirsty, or when we have difficulty in breathing; but he was troubled if a day passed when he could not find someone to whom he could convey the Divine Message. He was so concerned about the guidance of people, and so physically pained by unbelief, that God advised him to be careful of his health, saying:

> Well, [O Muhammad] it may be that you will kill yourself, following after them, with grief that they do not believe in this Message. (*al-Kahf*, 18.6)

There was nobody left in Makka whom God's Messenger had not invited in public or in private to God's path. He had called some, like Abu Jahl who was extremely stubborn, at least fifty times. One of those whom he particularly desired should believe was his beloved uncle Abu Talib, who protected him against the cruelties of the Makkan polytheists. In the eleventh year of his Prophethood, when Abu Talib was on his death-bed, God's Messenger again invited him to belief, but the Makkan chiefs surrounded him so as to prevent his embracing Islam. God's Messenger was so grieved at Abu Talib's unbelief that he said:

> I will ask forgiveness from God for you as long as I am not forbidden to.
>
> A verse was revealed some time later, forbidding him to do this:
>
> It is not fitting for the Prophet and those who believe that they should invoke (God) for the forgiveness of the polytheists, even though they be near of kin (to them) after it has become clear to them that they are companions of the Fire. (*al-Tawba*, 9.113)

Abu Bakr, the closest Companion of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, knew how much God's Messenger had desired his uncle's belief. He took his aged father to God's Messenger upon his conversion on the day of the conquest of Makka, and doing so, sobbed bitterly. When asked why he was sobbing, he explained:

> O God's Messenger, I desired very much that my father should believe, and now he has believed. But I desired the belief of Abu Talib even more than that because you desired it. However, God did not grant him belief. That is why I am weeping.

The Prophet's invitation of Wahshi to Islam

One of the best examples of the Messenger's concern was his invitation to Wahshi, who had killed his beloved uncle, Hamza, in the Battle of Uhud. After the conquest of Makka, God's Messenger sent for him to accept Islam, but the latter returned the invitation with a letter, including the following verses:

> And those who invoke not with God any other deity, nor kill a soul that God has forbidden, except for just cause, nor commit illegal sexual intercourse – whoever does this shall receive the punishment. The torment will be doubled on him on the Day of Judgement and he will abide therein forever in disgrace. (*al-Furqan*, 25.68–9)

After the verse Wahshi added:

> You invite me to accept Islam, but I have committed all these sins mentioned in the verse. I have lived

> immersed in unbelief, had illegal sexual intercourse and, in addition, killed your uncle, who was most beloved by you. Will a man like me be forgiven that he should become a Muslim?'

God's Messenger sent him a written reply containing the following verse:

> Verily, God forgives not that partners should be associated with Him, but He forgives save that (anything else) to whom He wills. Whoever associates partners with God, he has indeed invented a tremendous sin. (*al-Nisa'*, 4.48)

Wahshi returned the letter with the excuse that the forgiveness promised in the verse depended on God's Will. Upon this, God's Messenger sent him a third letter in which the following verse was included:

> Say: 'O My slaves who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God. Surely God forgives all sins. Truly, He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.' (*al-Zumar*, 39.53)

Through this correspondence, God's Messenger had, in fact, affected Wahshi's heart and made it propitious for belief so that Wahshi could become a referent of the verse included in the last letter. He had enabled Wahshi to repent sincerely of his previous sins and elevated him to the rank of being a Companion. Nevertheless, the martyrdom of Hamza had affected God's Messenger so deeply that he whispered to Wahshi:

> Will you try not to present yourself to me too often; it may happen that I will remember Hamza, and may be unable to show you the proper affection.

Wahshi did try to keep out of sight of God's Messenger. He used to stand behind a pole and try to catch a glimpse of God's Messenger in the hope that he might allow him to present himself to him. However, it was not long before God's Messenger passed away and Wahshi set out to find an opportunity to make up for having killed Hamza. So, when the war of Yamamah broke out against Musaylimah the Liar, he hastened to the front with the spear with which he had killed Hamza. At the most critical point of the fighting, he saw Musaylima trying to flee and, straight away, threw his spear at the impostor. This was the end of Musaylima, and Wahshi prostrated himself before God. While tears were flowing from his eyes, he was as if saying :

Will you now allow me to show myself to you, O God's Messenger?

We cannot but wish that God's Messenger was present in spirit at Yamama and embraced him to show his pardon and full admission into his noble company.

Ikrima's conversion

Another fine example of God's Messenger's nobility and altruism, his love for mankind and concern about people's guidance, is his acceptance of Ikrima as a Companion. Ikrima was one of the most bitter enemies of Islam and the Messenger. He had participated in all the plots against Islam and its noble Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. He fled to the Yemen with his wife on the day Makka was conquered while many of his comrades chose conversion. His wife, Umm Hakam, convinced him to go to God's Messenger and ask forgiveness. Despite his previous crimes, Ikrima was welcomed by God's Messenger with the compliment: Welcome, O emigrant rider! After the conquest of Makka, there was no longer any 'emigration' in the true sense, but God's Messenger, upon him be peace, alluded, by this compliment, to his long journey from the Yemen to Madina.

Ikrima was deeply affected by the nobility of God's Messenger and requested him to ask God's pardon for his sins. When the Messenger did so, Ikrima felt exhilarated and promised the Messenger that he would spend for the sake of Islam the double of what he had spent in fighting against it.

Ikrima fulfilled his promise at the Battle of Yarmuk. He was wounded there and taken to a tent. On seeing his wife

weep beside him, he said to her:

Don’t weep, for I will not die before I witness the victory.

Some time later his uncle, Hisham, entered the tent and announced the good news that God had granted the Muslims victory. Ikrima asked to be helped to stand up, and when they did so, whispered:

O God’s Messenger, have I carried out the promise I gave you?

Then, he recited the verse, *Make me die as a Muslim and join me to the righteous* (*Yusuf*, 12.101), and submitted his soul to God.

God’s Messenger grieved throughout his life for the misfortunes of mankind

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, grieved throughout his life for the misfortunes of mankind. There was no rest for him, and he called people to God’s way all the time. During his years in Makka, he walked in streets and visited the fairs held every year around Makka, in the hope of gaining a few converts. Insults, derision and torture were not able to to make him forsake the communication of his Message. When the verse, *Warn your tribe of the nearest kindred* (*al-Shu‘ara’*, 26.214) was revealed, he invited his nearest relatives to his house for a meal. ‘Ali, the son of Abu Talib, later narrated the incident as follows:

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, invited his relatives to his house. After the meal, he addressed them and said:

> God has commanded me to warn my nearest relatives. You are my tribe of the nearest kindred. I will not be able to do anything for you in the Hereafter unless you proclaim that ‘there is no deity but God’.

At the end of his speech, he asked them who among them would support him in his cause. I was, at that time, a boy with puny legs and arms. When I saw that no one responded to God’s Messenger, I put aside the pitcher in my hand and declared:

> I will, O Messenger of God!

The Messenger repeated the call three times and each time no one, except me, answered him.

God’s Messenger continued to convey his Message without being tired and daunted

God’s Messenger continued to convey his Message without being tired and daunted. He met reactions of the harshest kind: he was derided, degraded and beaten; he was expelled from fairs, and he was stoned in Ta’if. Years passed until he met, in the twelfth year of his mission, at ‘Aqabah, outside Makka, with a group of people from Madina. He communicated his Message to them, and they accepted Islam. The following year, seventy people from Madina became Muslims at the same place. These new Muslims took the oath of allegiance to God’s Messenger and promised to support him if he emigrated to Madina. This was the beginning of a new phase in the life of God’s Messenger. He appointed Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr to teach them Islam. When he emigrated to Madina the following year, there was left no house without, at least, one convert.

Further remarks on conveying the Message

An important point to take note of, regarding communication of the Message by the Prophet, upon him be peace and

blessings, is that he set an excellent example of ardour in the duty of guiding people. Like him, also his Companions, following his way, tried their hardest to convey the Message. For example, as stated above, Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr represented the Message in Madina so competently and communicated it so sincerely that even the most stubborn of the people of Madina like Sa'd ibn Mu'adh became Muslims. At first, Sa'd reacted to Mus'ab harshly, but when Mus'ab said to him mildly,

> First sit and listen. If you are not pleased with what I will tell you, do not hesitate to cut off my head with the sword in your hand.

Sa'd's anger subsided, and he parted from Mus'ab a Muslim.

God's Messenger continued to dispatch his Companions to neighbouring cities. He sent Talha to Duwmat al-Jandal, and Bara' ibn A'dhib to the Yemen. If a Companion was not successful in this duty – although this was rare – he sent another in his place. When Khalid and Bara' could not capture the hearts of the people of the Yemen, God's Messenger sent 'Ali and, as a result, almost all of them became Muslims in a very short time.

The developments after the Treaty of Hudaybiya

Another important point to note regarding the communication of the Message by the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, is his use of the period following the treaty of Hudaybiya. The conditions of this treaty had seemed to some of the Companions, at first sight, dishonourable (to the Muslims). However, in the peaceful atmosphere that followed the treaty, coming as it did after the years of disruptions and fighting, many of the enemies of Islam found the opportunity to re-consider the Message of Islam. Consequently, many leading figures, among them Khalid and 'Amr ibn al-'As, accepted Islam.

God's Messenger welcomed Khalid with the compliment,

> I was wondering how a sensible man like Khalid could remain an unbeliever; I had a strong conviction that you would one day accept Islam.

He comforted 'Amr ibn al-'As, who asked him to pray for God's forgiveness of him, and said:

> Do you not know that a man is cleansed of all his previous sins when he accepts Islam.

After the treaty of Hudaybiyah, God's Messenger, upon him be peace, sent letters to the rulers of all of the neighbouring countries. He wrote in the letter to the Negus, the king of Abyssinia:

The Messenger's letters to neighbouring rulers

> From Muhammad, God's Messenger, to the Negus Asham, the King of Abyssinia;
>
> Peace be upon you! On this occasion, I praise God, the Sovereign, the Holy One free from all defects, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures, and I bear witness that Jesus is a spirit from God, and a word from Him, whom He bestowed upon Mary, who was chaste, pure and virgin. I call you to God, One with no partner.

The Prince of the Two Worlds urged the conversion of the Negus by beginning the letter with the greeting of peace for him. Second, since the Negus was a Christian, God's Messenger expressed his belief in the Prophethood of Jesus, and affirmed the virginity and purity of Mary, thus emphasizing the point of agreement between them.

The Negus received the letter, and, kissing it, put it to his head as a sign of respect. After reading the letter, the Negus accepted Islam without hesitation and dictated to his secretary the following answer:

> To Muhammad, God's Messenger, from the Negus,
>
> I bear witness that you are the Messenger of God. If you command me to come to you, I will do it, but I am not in a position to make my subjects Muslim. O God's Messenger, I testify that what you say is all true.

The Negus was so sincere in his belief that he said one day to his confidants:

> I would rather be a servant of Muhammad than a king.

When he died, God's Messenger performed the funeral prayer for him in absentia.

The following letter was sent to Heraclius, the emperor of Byzantium:

> From Muhammad, the servant of God and His Messenger, to Heraclius, the greatest of the Byzantines,
>
> Peace be upon him who follows the guidance. After that, I invite you to Islam; be a Muslim and secure salvation, that God may give you a double reward. If you turn away, you will be burned with, besides your own, the sins of all those who turn away (among your people).
>
> Say: 'O people of the Book. Come to a word common between us and you that we worship none but God, that we associate nothing in worship with Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. If they turn away, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.'(*Al 'Imran*, 3.64)

The Byzantine Emperor and Abu Sufyan on the Messenger

The Emperor was moved by the letter. He summoned Abu Sufyan, who was then in Syria leading a Makkan trade caravan. The following dialogue took place between them:

> — What is the family status of this person?
>
> — A noble one.
>
> — Did any of his ancestors claim Prophethood?
>
> — No!
>
> — Was there a king among his ancestors?
>
> — No, there wasn't.
>
> — Do th elite or the weak mostly follow him?'
>
> — The weak do.
>
> — Has any apostatized after conversion to his religion?

— So far, nobody has.

— Do his followers increase or decrease?

— They are increasing day by day.

— Have you ever heard him tell a lie?

— No, never.

— Has he ever broken his promise?

— So far he hasn't but I don't know whether he will in the future.

Although Abu Sufyan was then a most ruthless enemy of God's Messenger, he told the truth about him except in his last words which might cause doubts as to the future trustworthiness of the Prophet. The Emperor showed an inclination to acknowledge the faith but in the face of the reaction from the priests beside him, he only concluded:

> In the very near future, all these lands I am resting upon now will be his.

However, according to Imam Bukhari's narration, the bishop of the area accepted Islam.

God's Messenger sent letters to some other kings, among whom was Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt, who responded with some presents. Nevertheless, the Chosroes of Persia tore up the letter, an incident predicting the end of the Persian Sassanid Empire, which took place during the caliphate of 'Umar, may God be pleased with him.

When, in the Qur'an, God ordered Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, to communicate the Message, He addresses him, '*O Messenger*', to show that his is the highest rank among the Prophets. While all the other Prophets are addressed by name, this form of address to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, demonstrates that he is the foremost in fulfilling Divine Messengership, in other words, in conveying the Message. The civilization based upon the principles he conveyed over a remarkably short period of time has attracted and astounded many – so much so that, as recorded in *Mizanci Murad Tarihi* (History by Mizanci Murad), Auguste Comte, the atheist French philosopher, after visiting the remains of the Islamic civilization of Andalusia, made a brief study of Islam. When he learned that the Prophet Muhammad was unlettered, he said:

> Muhammad was not a god, but he was not just a human being either.

However, quoting al-Busiri, we say:

> The conclusion which we draw after all the information we have gathered about him is that he is a human being, but the best among God's creation.

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OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE IN CONVEYING THE MESSAGE

The following three points are important in conveying the Message of Islam:

Intelligence

Intelligence is important in assessing the person to whom the Message is to be delivered. Concerning this, a PropheticTradition reads:

> We, the community of the Prophets, are commanded to address people according to their level of understanding.

A good preacher should know how to approach the one he wants to address and how to win his friendly attention. This point can be illustrated by many examples from the life of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Here are two of them:

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, at first, won the heart of 'Umar by showing appreciation of his good sense, saying:

> I cannot understand how a reasonable man like you can expect anything from inanimate objects like stones, wood or earth.

He also inspired confidence in 'Umar through his good conduct. Above all, the commitment he displayed in worshipping God had so great an effect on 'Umar that at last he came to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and was as obedient and reverent before him as a well-mannered child before a respected father.



The Messenger and a young man desirous of fornication

One day, a young man (whose name appears, from different narrations, to have been Julaybib) came to God's Messenger and said:

> O God's Messenger, give me the permission to fornicate, for it is something I cannot resist.

Those who were present reacted in different ways. Some scoffed at the young man, others pulled him by the skirt of his robe, and still others made as if to strike him. But the compassionate Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, drew him nearer to himself, and the following conversation took place between them:

— Would you agree that someone should do such a thing with your mother?

— My mother and father be your ransom, O God’s Messenger, I do not agree with that.

— Indeed, no one agrees that his mother should be a party in such a disgraceful act. Would you agree that someone should do the same with your daughter, if you had one?

— No, O God’s Messenger, may my soul be sacrificed for you!

— Indeed, no one agrees that someone should do the same with his daughter. Would you agree that your wife, if you had one, should be a party to such an illicit intercourse?

— No, I wouldn’t, O God’s Messenger!

— Would you agree that the same be done to your sister or aunt?

— No, I wouldn’t.

— Indeed, no one agrees that it should be done with his wife, sister or aunt.

This conversation was enough for the young man to forsake his desire. But God’s Messenger concluded the ‘spiritual operation’ with a supplication. He put his blessed hand on the chest of the young man and prayed:

O God, forgive him, purify his heart and maintain his chastity!

Julaybib became a model of chastity. Some time later he married through the intermediation of God’s Messenger. Not long after that he was martyred in a battle after he had killed seven people. When his dead body was located on the battlefield, God’s Messenger put his hand on his knee and said:

This one is of me, and I am of him.

God’s Messenger was so competent and successful in educating the people that it constitutes a conclusive proof of his Prophethood: the most uncivilized, crude, ill-mannered, ruthless and ignorant people of the world at that time were transformed into the most praiseworthy guides of humanity in a very short period. I wonder whether even the largest, best-equipped group of professional educators, modern pedagogues, sociologists, psychologists, teachers and the like, could achieve in a hundred years anywhere in the modern civilized world even a hundredth of what God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, accomplished in twenty-three years in the uncivilized desert of Arabia fourteen centuries ago. The efforts made, and the techniques applied, to remove so insignificant a bad habit as smoking with almost negligible success, prove that the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, was without parallel or equal in the education of people.

His wisdom and intellect will be discussed more fully in the next section.



The Prophets practised what they preached

If a preacher desires his preaching to be effective on people, he should practise what he preaches. One who says what he does not do can hardly expect to succeed in his mission. Actions speak louder than words. The Qur’an is very explicit in this matter:

> O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? Most hateful it is in the sight of God that you say what you do not do (*al-Saff*, 61.2 -3).

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was the living embodiment of his mission. He was the foremost in practising Islam, in devotion to God, in servanthood to Him. It usually happened that one who saw him did not feel the need to see any other proofs to believe in his Prophethood. For example, 'Abd Allah ibn Salam, the renowned scholar of the Jewish community in Madina, believed in him at first sight of him, saying:

> There can be no lie in this face; the one who has such a face can only be a Messenger of God.

'Abd Allah ibn Rawaha, a famous poet of the time, expressed this fact in a couplet whose meaning is:

> Even if he had not come with manifest signs,
> A single look at him suffices to inspire belief in him.

Those who believed in him in his time were not foolish or unreasonable people. Among them were men who, like the first four caliphs, namely Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali, may God be pleased with them all, administered a very great state. They were also so profound in spirituality and so deep in belief that 'Ali, for example, once said:

> If the veil (between this material world and the immaterial world) were to be lifted up, my certainty (of the Unseen) would not increase.



Should I not be a thankful slave of God?

One of the reasons why the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is still loved deeply by hundreds of millions despite the concerted, hostile efforts of propaganda to remove him from the hearts of his people and why, by contrast, he gains each day thousands of new converts all over the world, is that he practised what he advised others to do. For example, he invited people to worship God sincerely and he himself set the best example in this respect. He would spend more than half of the night standing in prayer before God in tears, and utmost humility, and when asked why he gave himself so great a trouble as it caused his feet to swell, and did so even though he was sinless, he would answer:

Should I not be a thankful slave of God?

As narrated by 'A'isha, his wife, one night he asked her permission to get up and pray – he was so sensitive to the rights of his wives as to request, while with them, their permission to perform supererogatory prayer. He prayed until daybreak and shed tears. He frequently recited the following verses,

> In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of day and night, there are signs for men of understanding. Those that remember God standing, sitting, and lying down, and meditate upon the creation of the heavens and the earth. 'Our Lord! You have not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Protect us from the punishment of the Fire. Our Lord! Those whom You will admit to the Fire, You have abased them; for wrong-doers there are no helpers. Our Lord! We have heard a caller calling to faith: "Believe you in your Lord"! So we believed. Our Lord! Therefore forgive us our sins and remit from us our evil deeds, and take our souls in death in the company of the righteous! Our Lord! And grant us what You did promise to us through Your Messengers, and do not abase us on the Day of Resurrection. You never break the promise! (*Al 'Imran*, 3.190–4)27

Again, 'A'isha reports:

> I woke up one night and I could not see God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, beside me. I was jealous lest he had gone to another of his wives. As I just got up from bed, my hand touched his feet. I noticed

that he was prostrate, praying:

> O God! I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your wrath, and in Your forgiveness from Your punishment; I also seek refuge in Yourself from You. I cannot praise You as You praise Yourself.



So simple a life

His life was so simple that once 'Umar, on seeing him, said:

> O Messenger of God! While kings sleep in soft, feather beds, you are lying on a rough mat. You are the Messenger of God and thereby deserve more than any other people to live an easy life.

God's Messenger answered him:

> Do you not agree that the luxuries of the world should be theirs but those of the Hereafter ours?

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, lived for others. Indeed, he desired his nation to live a comfortable life without, however, being deluded by its luxuries, but he himself lived a very simple life.



The Prophets asked for no reward

God's Messenger, like all the other Prophets, may God's peace be upon them all, never thought of any wages in return for his mission. He suffered hunger, thirst and every other kind of hardship. He was forced to leave his native town, and was made the target of many assaults and traps. He bore all these simply for the good pleasure of God and the good of mankind. He never expected anything from people.

Abu Hurayra once saw him performing his prayer in a sitting position and asked him whether he was ill. The reply was of the kind that made Abu Hurayra weep:

> I am hungry, O Abu Hurayra. Hunger has left me no strength to stand up for prayer.

Hunger was common to them. One night, God's Messenger, Abu Bakr and 'Umar met each other unexpectedly outside their homes. 'What brought you to come out at this time of night?', they asked one another. The reply of each was the same: '*hunger'.*

Even though most of his Companions became wealthier in later years, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never changed his lifestyle, nor did his family. They continued to live a very simple life. His daughter, Fatima, for example, though his most beloved child and the only one surviving, did all of her housework by herself. When the prisoners captured in a battle were shared out in Madina, Fatima asked his father to assign her a maid, but God's Messenger said in response:

> O my daughter! Before I have satisfied all the needs of the people of the *Suffa*, I cannot allocate you anything. However, shall I teach you something better for you than having a servant? When you go to bed, say, '*Glory be to God, All praise be to God*', and '*God is the Greatest*', each thirty-three times. (*God is the Greatest* thirty-four times, according to a different version.) This will be better for you concerning your next life.

One day, he saw Fatima wearing a bracelet (or a necklace, according to another version) and warned her, saying:

> O my daughter! Do you desire that people should say of the daughter of God's Messenger that she is wearing a ring of Hellfire? Take it off immediately!

In addition to receiving no worldly benefit from his people, God's Messenger also had to bear many tortures. He was covered in dust many times and no one except Fatima ran to his aid. Once he was beaten at the Ka'ba and Abu Bakr hastened to help him, shouting to those beating him:

Will you kill a man because he says, 'My Lord is God?'

By examining his words and deeds, one can see that every one of them declares Muhammad is the Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

INTELLECT

Introduction

Intellect is another important attribute of Prophethood. We mean by intellect, as attributed to the Prophets, a composite of reasoning power, sagacity, intelligence, sound judgement and wisdom far-exceeding the capacity of ordinary people. The intellect of a Prophet is a faculty that overpasses ordinary reasoning through a sublime power of understanding; it encompasses and co-ordinates all human abilities, whether of the heart and soul or of the mind.

Under the influence of some passing trends, some take a reductive view of Islam as a rationalistic system. They regard reason as the ultimate authority without distinguishing between the judgement of a sound reason and the excesses and shortcomings of rationalism. All the principles of Islam, being a revealed religion originating in an All-Encompassing Knowledge, can certainly be confirmed by reason. But it should never be forgotten that a full understanding of Islam as revealed by God requires Prophetic intellect able to grasp the meaning of the universe and man overall and in detail. Islam does, indeed, admit the ultimate authority of reason, not the mortal reason of each individual, limited by his particular capacity and, in most cases, conflicting with the reason of other individuals, but of the universal reason of the Prophet, for Islam is the name of the Divine universal order.



The Prophets functioned as a ‘prism’ to receive and reflect the Divine Revelations

God manifests His Names through veils. Although His absolute Unity demands that we attribute the effects directly to His creative Power, His Transcendence, Grandeur and Majesty require ‘natural’ causes to veil His acts, so that people should not ascribe to Him some things and events seeming unagreeable to them. He therefore raised the Prophets as ‘the means’ by which to communicate His Revelations to people. As it is impossible for everyone to receive His Revelations directly from Him, the Prophets functioned as a ‘prism’ to receive and reflect the Divine Revelations. They modulated them according to the understanding capacity of individuals in different ages and under different circumstances. That is, the Prophetic intellect through which a Prophet understands people in their diverse characters, mental capacities, moods and other personal distinguishing traits and so answers the questions and solves the problems put to him. If we study the achievement of the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, in all the diverse aspects of his life and mission, we see that he was both a statesman and commander of the highest order. As the embodiment or most comprehensive manifestation of the Divine Attribute of Speech, he is the most influential orator of all times; one whose words strike everyone and, however simple they may appear at first sight according to the mental capacity of the persons hearing them and the scientific level of the time, they are, in fact, like an ocean, whose depth is only appreciated the more deeply one dives into it, or like a rose with petals one within the other, each full of meanings. Also, his level of understanding was such that Wahb ibn Munabbih, who knew the Torah and Gospels very well, said:

When compared to that of God’s Messenger, the total mental capacity and perception of all people is like a single particle of sand as compared to all the sand in a vast desert.



PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

EXAMPLES TO SHOW THE EXTRAORDINARY INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY OF GOD'S MESSENGER

His arbitration in the restoration of Ka‘ba

The Ka‘ba had been partly ruined by rain and resultant floods. The Quraysh restored it; the moment came when the Black Stone had to be put back in its place. It would be an honour for the individual or clan who did that since the Black Stone was revered for its sanctity. A conflict was about to ensue between the clans, anxious to acquire that honour, when one of the disputants suggested that they should refer the matter to the arbitration of whoever first would appear at the Ka‘ba. To everyone’s relief, the first to appear was Muhammad. They shouted in unison:

– The Trustworthy One is coming!

They explained the problem to Muhammad, who was not yet a Prophet, but surely being prepared by God for his future mission. He asked them to fetch a piece of cloth, which he spread on the ground. Putting the Black Stone on it, he told the chiefs of the clans to each take a corner of the cloth. In this way they raised the Stone to the required height. Then, the future Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings, took it himself and put it in its place. Thanks to his wisdom, the danger of a war between the clans was averted.



God’s Messenger was unique in his ability to assess the spiritual and mental capacities of those he was to address.

He also understood very well how best to speak to a particular individual at a particular time and under particular circumstances, without having recourse to immoral devices like flattery or falsehoods. On an occasion, a man named Husayn, renowned for his persuasive rhetoric, came to God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, hoping to dissuade him from his mission. God’s Messenger listened carefully to his argument and after Husayn had finished his speech, the following dialogue ensued between them:

— O Husayn, how many deities do you worship?

— Eight, one in the heavens and the others on earth.

— Which one of them do you call upon when a misfortune befalls you?

— Upon the one in the heavens.

— Which do you call when your goods are gone?

> — Upon the one in the heavens.

God's Messenger asked several more questions of the same fashion and, on receiving the same answer each time, concluded:

> The One – according to you – in the heavens alone answers your calls but you still associate partners with Him. Is this not what I have been preaching? There is no deity but God. So, become a Muslim and be saved!

This apparently simple argument was enough to defeat Husayn, who was left, according to his own reasoning, no alternative but to accept Islam or stubbornly persist in unbelief on no better grounds than to please the caprices of his own selfhood or yield to the pressures of his environment.



The Messenger had the extraordinary ability of knowing the mood of every individual

A Bedouin is often called 'a man of the desert', a way of life to which certain experiences are peculiar. For example, it happens many times that he will lose a camel, or forget where he has placed things, or be caught in a storm. However many deities he worships in his daily life, he will do nothing other than pray to God, the One, the Unique Creator of the universe, and Powerful over all things, for help and rescue. Or his inner sense and sound conscience will speak the truth to him under the enchanting sky of the desert or in the darkness, and he will then acknowledge the Oneness of God, as Hamza, the uncle of God's Messenger, upon him be peace, did with the words:

> — O Muhammad! I have perceived in the darkness of the desert night, that God is so great that He cannot be restricted within four walls!

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had the extraordinary ability of knowing the mood of every individual and accordingly taking him 'by the soul'. For example, it is reported from Abu Tamima by Ahmad ibn Hanbal that a Bedouin came to God's Messenger one day and asked:

> — Are you Muhammad?
>
> — Yes, I am Muhammad, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, answered gently.

The Bedouin asked again: 'What do you invite people to?'

The Messenger replied as follows:

> I invite people to God, the All-Majestic. I invite them to Him alone, without associating any partners with Him. He is God whom you call upon when a misfortune befalls you and He who removes it from you. It is to Him alone that you pray in the time of drought and famine and He sends rain and causes the grass to grow. It is also Him you entreat when you lose something in the vast desert and He causes you to find it.

These simple words, accurate and straight to the point, were enough for the Bedouin to awake to the truth, and he made the oath of allegiance to God's Messenger, upon him be peace.

Who, other than the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, has ever been able to form a community of the virtuous out of people with hardened hearts. The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, employed the dynamics granted to him by God, the All-Mighty, in so effective a way that historians and sociologists

have since been unable to fully grasp the revolution he achieved in all its many dimensions. That revolution was such that the waves it made have swept through the ages and continue to attract people from all over the world, in increasing numbers, into the peaceful 'ocean' of Islam.



The Messenger was unequalled in solving problems

The Master of the Prophets solved problems, as Bernard Shaw pointed out, as easily as one drinks coffee. Even in the face of the most unexpected emergencies which would drive into panic even men of the greatest wit and sagacity, he never lost his calmness and solved the problem in the best way possible. His every deed, his every decision, his every word, proved him a man of exact balance, who never blundered.



A typical event following the Battle of Hunayn

With the conquest of Makka, many former enemies of Islam accepted belief. After years of enmity and battle, it was naturally difficult for them to acquire sincerity of belief at the very outset of their conversion. So, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in order to 'reconcile their hearts' and enable them to become committed more fully and sincerely to Islam, preferred them over the others in the distribution of the spoils of war following the Battle of Hunayn, which took place shortly after the conquest of Makka.

The spoils consisted of 24,000 camels, 40,000 sheep and goats and 10,000 pounds of gold and silver. God's Messenger gave Abu Sufyan and his family 300 camels and 250 pounds of gold and silver, 200 camels to Hakim ibn Hizam, and 100 camels each to Nusayr ibn al-Harith, Qays ibn Asiyy, Safwan ibn Umayya, Malik ibn Awf, Akra ibn Habis and 'Uyayna ibn Hisn. By doing this, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, also repaired the wounded pride of the Makkan chiefs.

Some of the younger Muslims among the Helpers (the Ansar of Madina), however devoted to God's Messenger and the cause of Islam they were, were upset at the distribution, not because of attachment to worldly things but because those Makkan chiefs had once been the most bitter enemies of Islam and had inflicted severe blows upon them in the previous battles. This upset might have caused the beginning of a movement of dissent among the Muslims. When informed of the situation by Sa'd ibn 'Ubada, who was one of the two leaders of the Helpers, God's Messenger ordered that the Helpers should come together in a certain place where he would address them. When they were assembled, he began his address to them in a dramatic way to attract and hold their attention and to impress their souls. He said:

> O Community of the Helpers! I have heard that you are displeased with me.

Following this striking opening, he continued in that powerful impressive style, reminding the Helpers of God's blessings upon them through him. He said:

> Were you not in misguidance when I came to you? And has God not guided you to the truth through me?
>
> Were you not in poverty when I came to you? And has God not enriched you through me?
>
> Were you not in internal conflicts when I came to you? And has God not reconciled you through me?

The Helpers gave the same unanimous answer to each question of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings:

> — True, O God's Messenger! We are indebted to God and His Messenger!

After reminding them of God's infinite blessings upon them through him, God's Messenger recounted the services of the Helpers to Islam, saying:

> O Community of the Helpers! If you had desired, you could have answered me differently and said:
>
> > Your people denied you but we believed in you; you came to us left alone to yourself, but we admitted you and protected you. Your people exiled you but we embraced you. You came to us with nothing to subsist on, and we met all your needs. If you had responded to me so, you would have told the truth and no one would have stood up to contradict you.
>
> O Community of the Helpers! If you were upset when I gave some worldly goods to those whom I desired to become Muslims, do you not wish to return home with God's Messenger while the others are returning with camels and sheep? I swear by God, in Whose Hand of Power is my soul, that if all other people took a different direction from that of the Helpers, I would go, without hesitation, along with the Helpers. Had it not been for the Emigration, I wished so much I had been one from the Helpers! O God, protect the Helpers and their descendants!

These words were enough for the Helpers to burst into tears, and all of them responded with one voice, saying:

> — We are content with God and His Messenger. We desire nothing else.

Although uttered extempore, this speech, besides nipping in the bud a possible dissenting movement, reconquered the hearts of the Helpers, may God be pleased with them all. It will be worthwhile briefly to analyze this in order to understand its sagacity.

First of all, this speech was made to the Helpers separately from the Emigrants. Since the ones who felt offended by the Prophet's distribution of the war spoils were from the Helpers. God's Messenger excluded the Emigrants to enable him to deliver a more precise and direct speech and to get the addressees to concentrate more on what he would say. By excluding the Emigrants, God's Messenger honoured the Helpers specifically and exerted a psychological influence upon them from the outset.

A further merit of this decision is that some of his statements, such as 'while the others are returning with sheep and camels', might have hurt the feelings of Makkans. Similarly, his praise of the Helpers and prayer for them exclusively might have hurt the feelings of the Emigrants, who had left their families and native land for the sake of God's Messenger.

Second, the speech, when considered in its Arabic original, is extraordinary for the eloquence of its rhetoric.

Third, it is worth repeating that God's Messenger had won the attention of his listeners after the dramatic opening and then, by continuing to speak to them and for them, he succeeded in keeping them in rapt attention.

Fourth, God's Messenger did not resort to flattery or a diplomatic mode of statement. Rather, he spoke in plain sincerity, which was vital in securing the desired influence upon the listeners.

Fifth, the extempore nature of the speech was also significant in obtaining the desired result. The freshness and force of such an unprepared address, on such occasions, is often more affecting than prepared words.

Those few examples I have cited to illustrate the intellect of God's Messenger demonstrate that he did not speak or act of himself; rather, what he said and did carried the charge or force of one fulfilling a Divine mission.



PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE CONCISE NATURE OF THE PROPHET' S SAYINGS

Introduction

Another dimension of the intellect of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is that he was very concise in his speeches. We must remember that he is the leader, not only of those who lived during his lifetime, but of every believer to come until the Last Day. As emphasized in the previous section, he was in the position of one who addressed people of every level – from 7th century Bedouins to scientists of the highest level to come just before the Day of Judgement. No generation would contradict him. Accordingly, after we scrutinize his sayings, as well as the Qur'an, with due care, we come to understand that not only do they complement each other in style and content, but that there is no contradiction between them and established scientific knowledge. Millions of people have, from the beginning of Islam, found in them an answer for their intellectual problems and a cure for their spiritual diseases, as well as a model for their behaviour in all circumstances.

The sayings and speeches of God's Messenger are so enchanting and captivating, so informative that just as his contemporaries were enlightened intellectually and revived spiritually through them, so also countless scholars and scientists, from exegetes of Qur'an, traditionists and jurists of the highest calibre, to the great spiritual guides of different moods and temperaments, as also specialists in the fields of science and humanities, have, next to the Qur'an, all found their sources in them. A single word of his is, even today, enough for many people, not less than it was for his contemporaries, to reform their lives and beliefs when they hear it. He used to acknowledge this to be one of God's blessings and, in order to emphasize it as a blessing, he sometimes used to say:

> I am Muhammad, an unlettered Prophet; there is no Prophet to come after me. I have been distinguished with conciseness of speech together with comprehensiveness of meaning.

Also he used to say:

> O people! I have been honoured with conciseness of speech and giving the final judgement in all matters.



The Messenger came to sing the praises of God in the 'garden' of humanity and to announce God's Commandments with his enchanting 'songs'

The nightingale is said to convey the gratitude of plants and flowers to the All-Provider. Likewise, God's Messenger came to sing the praises of God in the 'garden' of humanity and to announce God's Commandments with his enchanting 'songs'. His words opened ever-fresh flowers in the hearts of people and reduced the sayings of others to nought, however persuasive they seemed on the surface. The believers were purified by the deep serenity of his words, exhilarated by the bright atmosphere he created through his speeches, as well as by the love his personal conduct inspired.

God's Messenger removed, through his words and deeds, the veils from the 'face' of nature and embellished the 'book

of the universe' with Divine inscriptions.

Many of those famous for rhetoric or oratory and poetry have either preferred to listen to him or greatly benefited from his sayings. Thousands of literary men have devoted their life to the study of his sayings and compiled many volumes of books about or out of them, and many thinkers and scholars have quenched their 'thirst' with the 'water of life' they contain. In order to express the beauty and comprehensiveness of his words, we had better adapt, with a slight difference, a couplet uttered about the Qur'an:

Almost nothing of this world has come unveiled or pure,

> But the words of the Messenger preserve their purity undefiled, and still wait to be understood fully.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was unlettered, and therefore not influenced by the written culture of the time. He was of so sound a conscience, so comprehensive in intellect and so pure in character, that only he could have received the Divine Revelations. His mind and heart were fed by Divine Revelation exclusively and each of his words and deeds was a ray from that Revelation, being a sign of his Messengership. Like a bright, crystal cup of clear, sweet water, his intellect was so pure that the Divine Revelations entered it and emerged from it drop by drop, in the form of words in their first clarity.

The primary expression of the Divine Revelation is the Qur'an. It is also the primary source for Islamic law. Although it contains guidance pertaining to all aspects of human life, the number of questions and problems put to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, meant that a second form of Revelation was necessary – implicit Revelation or inspiration. It was required either to clarify the answers found in the Qur'an or to establish new principles related to the conduct of the believers. This, together with his sayings and conduct in everyday life, makes up the second source of Islamic law, which we call the Sunna, and we will discuss it in the second volume .



Every Prophet was supported by the miracles relevant to their time and environment

Every Prophet was supported by the miracles relevant to their time and environment. For example, magic was widespread at the time of the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, and so the miracles that appeared at his hands were of a similar nature. As the practice of medicine was in demand at the time of Jesus, upon him be peace, the miracles he worked were related to healing. Similarly, when Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, emerged as a Prophet, four crafts enjoyed popularity in the Arabian peninsula:

1. Eloquence and fluency in writing and speaking,

2. Poetry and oratory,

3. Soothsaying and divination,

4. Knowledge about the events of the past and about cosmology.

The Qur'an challenged the known experts in these four fields and forced them to surrender. The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, surpassed them all through his wonderful eloquence, knowledge of the cosmos, and his predictions, most of which have proven, and the rest of which wait their due time to be proven, to be true.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

EXAMPLES OF THE CONCISE SAYINGS OF GOD' S MESSENGER (1)

Muhammad’s words, together with the Qur’an, which is his greatest miracle, supersede all literary works

As the Prophethood of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is universal and will last until the Last Day, no one has been, and ever will be, able to compete with him in eloquence and linguistic style. His words, together with the Qur’an, supersede all literary works. Their excellence is everlasting and will become increasingly vivid as their meanings are discovered in parallel to the passage of time. His words and the Qur’an are of such extraordinary nature and so full of meaning that millions of saints and gnostics have obtained perfect knowledge of Divine Essence, Attributes and Names through them. The hidden truths concerning the Unseen worlds – angels, jinn, the Hereafter, Paradise and Hell – have all been unveiled through them. Also, they have together been a pure, inexhaustible source for hundreds of thousands of jurists, interpreters of the Qur’an, traditionists, historians and scientists, as well as sociologists and psychologists. The Qur’an and the Sunna have brought light to the lives of billions and shown them how to pray, fast, give alms, how to make pilgrimage, and even how to eat and drink, and how to speak, in short, how to act at every moment of their lives.



Encouraging belief and submission and the truth of Destiny

Imam Tirmidhi relates from Ibn ‘Abbas, the Scholar of the Ummah, that God’s Messenger said to him:

> O young man! Let me teach you a few principles: Observe the rights of God so that God will protect you. Observe His rights in order to find Him always with you. When you ask something, ask it from God. When you seek help, seek it from God. Know that if all people gathered together to benefit you, they would not be able to do so other than by that which God already preordained for you. If, by contrast, they came together to do you harm, they would not be able to do so other than by that which God already preordained against you. The Pen of Destiny was lifted and everything was already ordained.

This hadith encourages submission to God and belief in His Unity and the truth of Destiny. We should not misunderstand this hadith to exclude human free will. Rather, it stresses, on the part of man, action, prayer and the

need to strive to obtain desired results. It balances this with a warning that since everything is ultimately in the hands of God, man should strive in accordance with His Commandments and seek the results only from Him.



Man is a traveler in this world

Again, Imam Tirmidhi relates from Ibn ‘Umar:

God’s Messenger said:

> Live in the world as if you were a stranger or traveler. Regard yourself as one of the dead!

This succinct hadith is unequalled in encouraging us to lead an austere, disciplined life based on fear of God. It reminds us of our final destination. It stresses the transience of the world, and establishes the balance between the two lives, this one and the next.

Man is always a foreigner in this world. He is, in the words of Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, a thirteenth-century Turkish sufi, like a flute made of a reed separated from its group. He continually groans with the pangs of separation from his real Owner and ‘native land’. Man is, therefore, a traveler in this world, setting out from the World of the Spirits and travelling through the stations of the mother's womb, childhood, youth, old age, the grave and the Resurrection, finally ending his journey either in Paradise or Hell. In order to have a pleasant journey and arrive safely in Paradise, he should be aware of the transience of the worldly life and prepare for the eternal life. Although he is allowed to taste the pleasures of life to a certain extent, provided they are not specifically forbidden, he should not overindulge or forget his true destination.



Encouraging truthfulness and warning against lying

Authentic books of Tradition such as *Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Muslim* and *Sunan Abu Dawud* relate from ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud that God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

> It is incumbent upon you to be always truthful, for truthfulness guides to absolute piety and piety leads to Paradise. A man who always tells the truth and pursues the truth is written by God as a truthful one. Refrain from lying, for lying guides to sinfulness and sinfulness leads to Hellfire. A man continues to tell lies and pursues lies until he is written by God as a liar.

Truthfulness is an indispensable attribute of Prophethood while lying is a loathsome sign of hypocrisy. Truthfulness opens the door of happiness in both worlds. No one has tasted true bliss while living in the darkness of lies and lying.

Lying is a pillar of unbelief and the most manifest sign of hypocrisy. It means ‘an assertion contrary to God’s knowledge’. How unfortunate it is that today lying is so widespread. It is destroying security and morality, and we witness it contaminating the whole community, especially the political circles, like a ‘contagious disease’. It should, however, be noted that any ‘structure’ based on lying cannot last long. It will perish by its very nature.

The hadith states that truthfulness leads to ‘absolute piety’, while lying leads to sinfulness. The Arabic word we have here translated as ‘piety’ is birr. It encompasses every kind of virtue, from sound thinking and telling the truth to purity of intention, honesty, decency and good conduct. The word, fujur — sinfulness — denotes every kind of deviation and evil, including debauchery, indecency and perversion.

Persistent lying causes one to be classed as a liar, while he who always tells the truth will be identified with truthfulness. Lying and truthfulness are roads leading to Hell and Paradise respectively. This means that, as

emphasized by the hadith, a single act of lying may lead one who lies to perdition. It may be the first step to an unfortunate end.



A man is with him whom he loves

As reported by Bukhari and Muslim from Ibn Mas‘ud, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

A man is with him whom he loves.

This hadith would need volumes to explain fully. It is a source of hope and consolation for those who are unable to lead their life in a strict obedience to the Divine Commandments. One who has been endowed with love for Prophets and saints will be in their company in the Hereafter. Therefore, whoever desires their company in Paradise should love them sincerely and follow them as much as possible. Those who, on the other hand, love the enemies of God, will be with them in Hell in the Hereafter.

Nu‘ayman was one of the Companions of God's Messenger. He could not stop drinking alcohol, and was punished a few times. When once another Companion reproached him, God’s Messenger warned that Companion, saying: *Do not help Satan against your brother! I swear by God that he loves God and His Messenger*.

Since a believer who loves God and His Messenger sincerely will be in the company of God's Messenger in Paradise, he should not be reproached for an individual sin as long as he continues to perform his obligatory duties and tries to refrain from major sins. This is a prerequisite of his love of God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.



The principles of a happy life

As related by ibn Hanbal from Mu‘adh ibn Jabal, God’s Messenger said:

> Fear God wherever you are. Do good immediately after a sinful act to erase it, and always be well-mannered in your relationship with people.

This hadith concisely establishes the principles of a happy life in the world and describes the way to eternal bliss. Fear of God is the basis of every virtue and good conduct, and leads to Paradise. A man can, through fear of God, erase his sins with his good deeds, and being well-mannered elevates one to the rank of perfection.



The basic principle of public and political administration

In another saying of his, God’s Messenger declares:

> You are governed how you are (that is, according to your beliefs and your life-style.)

This hadith expresses a principle of public and political administration. The political structure of a country is shaped according to the tendencies of the people whether directly through democracy or indirectly through other ways.

Natural sciences like physics, chemistry, and biology have laws of their own, which we call ‘God’s creational and operational laws of the universe’, and so do the social sciences. If, according to these laws, a people do not refrain from sinful acts and live in the swamp of evils, they will inevitably be ruled by evil people. If, by contrast, they prefer a virtuous life, then the government formed by them will be a good one.

The hadith stresses that laws do not have sanction on their own. Their authority depends on the people who will apply them. Therefore, the character of the people who hold the reins of government is of vital importance. If the people are righteous, their rules will be the same; if they are not, they will have no right and justification to expect a righteous administration. The ruling elite are like the cream rising to the surface of a liquid: milk has cream of its kind as do lime and alum.

Hajjaj, a despotic commander during the time of 'Abd al-Malik, when reminded of the justice of 'Umar, answered: 'If you were like the people of 'Umar, I would be like 'Umar'.

The hadith also warns us that everybody should develop the sense of self-control and discern his own faults. In a society where people tend to put the blame on others, it is impossible to create social harmony. As emphasized in the Qur'an, *God will not change the condition of a people unless they change themselves* (*al-Ra'd*, 13.11). It is man himself who determines his fate and makes his history.

This brief hadith contains many principles relating to social sciences, but the scope of this book does not allow us to go into greater detail.



Actions are judged according to intentions

Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawud relate from the second Caliph, 'Umar that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

> Actions are judged according to intentions; whatever someone intends to do, he gets its reward. So, whoever emigrates for God and His Messenger, has emigrated for God and His Messenger; and whoever emigrates to acquire something worldly or to marry a woman, his emigration is to what he intends.

This hadith concerns a Companion who emigrated to marry a woman called Umm Qays, and is a cornerstone of the Islamic law and the foremost standard in evaluation of a believer's actions.

Intention is the spirit of a man's actions, without which any action will not be rewarded. If a man performs the five daily prayers without intention, or fasts during Ramadan without intention of performing the prescribed fast, or if he gives all his money to the poor without intention of paying the prescribed alms, he will not be counted as having fulfilled the obligatory duties of prayer, fasting and alms-giving. If he does not do all such duties for the sake of God and to obtain His good pleasure, he will not receive any reward and they will not be acceptable in the sight of God.

Hijra, the sacred emigration in the way of God, is, in one respect, the twin brother of *jihad*, the holy struggle in the way of God. Although there is no Hijra from Makka to Madina after the conquest of Makka, it will elsewhere continue along with *jihad* until the Last Day. Believers may emigrate to another land to continue their mission of preaching Islam, as God's Messenger and his Companions did in the early period of Islam. When it became impossible for them to do this in their native land, they emigrated to Madina. Such emigrations are accepted as hijra when they are purely for the sake of God.

Intention can sometimes be rewarded without action. For example, if a believer sincerely intends to do something good, but cannot do it due to some justifiable reasons, he will be rewarded for the action he has intended to do.

Intention multiplies the rewards of actions. It transforms every action of a believer into a kind of worship. It is impossible to rightfully earn eternal happiness in this short worldly life. But, by intending to worship God if he were to live until eternity, a believer deserves the eternal life of Paradise. Also, an obstinate unbeliever whose heart becomes absolutely closed to belief, deserves the eternal punishment of Hellfire for the same reason. Again, a believer who

goes to bed after the night prayer with the intention of getting up before dawnbreak to perform the prayer of tahajjud, is counted to have worshipped God during the whole night. It is for the reasons mentioned that God's Messenger declared: *The intention of a believer is more rewarding than his action.*



Who is a Muslim and who is an emigrant?

Bukhari records that God's Messenger said:

> The Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand Muslims are in security; as for the Emigrant, he is one who emigrates from what God forbids.

This hadith, like others, is one that expresses many truths in a few words. First of all, it describes the ideal, or norm of a Muslim by beginning with the words 'the Muslim', not 'a Muslim'. In this way, our Prophet draws attention to the qualities of perfect Muslims, not to those who are nominally Muslims but not really Muslims in their practices.

The Arabic word *Muslim*, derived from the infinitive *silm*, meaning security, peace and salvation, comes to mean one who desires and gives peace, security and salvation. So, when we identify a Muslim with the normative definite article or 'the Muslim', we mean a believer who has become the embodiment of peace, causing no sedition and anxiety, and one from whom everyone is in utmost security. He is the most reliable representative of peace and security in the world. He strives to bring peace, security and salvation to the world. He has dedicated himself to disseminating his inner peace and happiness to the outer world around him.

Secondly, our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, mentions the tongue before the hand. As everybody knows, the 'wounds' caused by the tongue are deeper and more hurtful than those caused by the hand. Besides, one is often prepared to strike more readily, easily and more frequently with one's tongue than with the hand. Slandering, backbiting, reproaching and other similar ways of hurting people are commoner and more difficult to avoid than hurt done by the hand. Further, if a person can refrain from hurting with the tongue, he can more easily refrain from the assaults by the hand. Again, defending oneself against physical assaults is, in most cases, easier than against verbal assaults of, in particular, backbiting and slandering. So, a true Muslim always restrains his tongue as well as his hand from hurting others.

In the same hadith, Emigration is conceived in a more general sense than the bodily emigration of leaving one's family, house, possessions and native land for the sake of God. Indeed, to be capable of the latter, one must first be capable of emigrating from the material dimension of his being to the spiritual one, from worldly pleasures to an altruistic life and from selfish aims to living for a Divine cause. Therefore, refraining from Divine prohibitions is directly related to being a good Muslim and sacrificing one's life in the service of people purely for the sake of God.



The sign of being a good Muslim

In another hadith, God's Messenger says:

> It is because of one's being a good Muslim that one abandons whatever is of no use to him.

Being a good Muslim means to practise *ihsan*, which means worshipping God as if you were seeing Him, in full awareness that even if you cannot see God, He oversees you all the time. When one attains this rank, one can say: 'I was searching for Him in the outer world, but now I have come to understand that He is the Soul within my soul'; or again he can say: 'I was in expectation of some news from beyond the world. However, the veil has been removed from my soul and I have seen myself.'

In order to attain this degree of excellence, the worshipper should abandon everything that is vain and useless to him. He should know that he is being supervised by God, and also that God's Messenger and discerning believers are aware of the real worth of his deeds. God says:

> Say: 'Work, and (know that) God will behold your work, and so will His Messenger and the believers; then you shall be brought back to the Knower of what is hidden and what is open, and He will declare to you all that you have done.' (*al-Tawba*, 9.105)

One cannot be a good Muslim unless one gives up heedlessness and indifference. Rather, a person should give proper care to his work and try his utmost to do his best at whatever he does. He should also be serious and reliable in all his dealings and transactions. Flippancy and frivolity both defame one's reliability and reduce one's dignity.



Reality of patience

As related by both Bukhari and Muslim, God's Messenger said:

Patience is shown just at the moment of misfortune.

In the early days of his mission, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had forbidden people to visit graves as some un-Islamic practices had not yet been wiped out. When no traces of such practices remained, he not only allowed but also encouraged his Companions to visit graves, as he himself did, as visiting the dead encourages one to strive to improve one's own moral conduct and work hard for the next life.

It was during one of his visits to the graveyard in Madina that God's Messenger saw a woman weeping bitterly and complaining about Destiny. When he attempted to console her, the woman, who did not recognize God's Messenger, said to him angrily: 'Go away! You don't know what misfortune has befallen me!' When later told that the man to whom she had spoken reproachfully was God's Messenger, the woman hurried after him and, finding him in his house, begged his pardon. God's Messenger told her then: Patience is shown just at the moment of misfortune.



Patience is a key to success and triumph

Patience is a key to success and triumph. It means the ability to accept pain, trouble, misfortune or anything that causes annoyance, without complaining, losing one's self-control or trust and belief in God and Destiny. It is necessary at the point when misfortune strikes. One can achieve this, sometimes, by a change of attitude, place or preoccupation, by changing the immediate conditions around one. To do *wudu'* (ritual ablution) or stand in prayer may also help one overcome an assault of sorrow.

There are three or four kinds of patience. The first is being determined and steadfast in not committing sins, which elevates one to the rank of the God-fearing, whom God takes into His care. The second kind of patience is being persistent in worshipping God regularly, which causes one to acquire the rank of being a beloved of God. The third is accepting every misfortune without complaining, which causes one to be included among the people of patience and those who put their trust in God. There is another, fourth, kind of patience which is shown in the face of exasperation. That is, one should know how to observe the deliberation, decreed by God's Wisdom, that is appropriate to obtain a particular result. In order to produce a loaf of bread, for example, one must cultivate the field, harvest the crop, take the grain to a mill and bake the loaf in an oven. If, due to impatience one does not act in compliance with this deliberation and neglects to follow all the steps in sequence, in the arrangement determined for all things, one will either overleap or omit some step, and so fail to achieve the desired result.

His life was so simple that once ‘Umar, on seeing him, said:

> O Messenger of God! While kings sleep in soft, feather beds, you are lying on a rough mat. You are the Messenger of God and thereby deserve more than any other people to live an easy life.

God’s Messenger answered him:

> Do you not agree that the luxuries of the world should be theirs but those of the Hereafter ours?

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, lived for others. Indeed, he desired his nation to live a comfortable life without, however, being deluded by its luxuries, but he himself lived a very simple life.

God’s Messenger, like all the other Prophets, may God’s peace be upon them all, never thought of any wages in return for his mission. He suffered hunger, thirst and every other kind of hardship. He was forced to leave his native town, and was made the target of many assaults and traps. He bore all these simply for the good pleasure of God and the good of mankind. He never expected anything from people.

Abu Hurayra once saw him performing his prayer in a sitting position and asked him whether he was ill. The reply was of the kind that made Abu Hurayra weep:

> I am hungry, O Abu Hurayra. Hunger has left me no strength to stand up for prayer.

Hunger was common to them. One night, God’s Messenger, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar met each other unexpectedly outside their homes. ‘What brought you to come out at this time of night?’, they asked one another. The reply of each was the same: ‘*hunger’.*

Even though most of his Companions became wealthier in later years, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never changed his lifestyle, nor did his family. They continued to live a very simple life. His daughter, Fatima, for example, though his most beloved child and the only one surviving, did all of her housework by herself. When the prisoners captured in a battle were shared out in Madina, Fatima asked his father to assign her a maid, but God’s Messenger said in response:

> O my daughter! Before I have satisfied all the needs of the people of the *Suffa*, I cannot allocate you anything. However, shall I teach you something better for you than having a servant? When you go to bed, say, ‘*Glory be to God, All praise be to God*’, and ‘*God is the Greatest*’, each thirty-three times. (*God is the Greatest* thirty-four times, according to a different version.) This will be better for you concerning your next life.

One day, he saw Fatima wearing a bracelet (or a necklace, according to another version) and warned her, saying:

> O my daughter! Do you desire that people should say of the daughter of God’s Messenger that she is wearing a ring of Hellfire? Take it off immediately!

In addition to receiving no worldly benefit from his people, God’s Messenger also had to bear many tortures. He was covered in dust many times and no one except Fatima ran to his aid. Once he was beaten at the Ka’ba and Abu Bakr hastened to help him, shouting to those beating him:

Will you kill a man because he says, ‘My Lord is God?’

By examining his words and deeds, one can see that every one of them declares Muhammad is the Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

EXAMPLES OF THE CONCISE SAYINGS OF GOD' S MESSENGER (2)

Having an upper hand

Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad ibn Hanbal record that God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

The upper hand is better than the lower one.

In another hadith, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, explains that ‘the upper hand’ is the hand which gives to the poor and needy, while ‘the lower hand’ is the one which takes. So, besides expressing the merits of charity, this hadith encourages people to work and earn their living without recourse to begging.

There is, however, a point in the hadith worth mentioning that, although the giving hand is, in general terms, better than the receiving hand, God’s Messenger did not use the expressions, ‘the one who gives’ and ‘the one who receives’; instead, he used the terms ‘the upper hand’ and ‘the lower hand’, which make the act, not the person, generally preferable so that, in some cases, the one who receives may be ‘better’ than the one who gives. Also, as stated in another hadith, God has some servants who, although despicable in appearance, are so beloved in the sight of God that when they predict something by swearing by God, God makes their predictions come true. Bara’ ibn Malik was among them. In addition, they ask nothing of people and are extraordinarily independent. For example, God’s Messenger had advised Thawban not to beg from people; therefore, Thawban would not even ask someone to pick up the whip he dropped while riding his camel; he dismounted and picked it up himself. So, when poor believers of this quality have to receive from people, it cannot be said of them that they are inferior to those who give to them.



Islam does not approve of begging

But to be sure, Islam does not approve of begging. As it is not becoming for a Muslim to beg, a Muslim country should also not fall into the condition of having to beg from other countries. It should never be forgotten that honour, dignity and superiority always belong to God, His Messenger and the believers. Therefore, Muslims should not, either individually or collectively, come under the control of unbelievers, and should always preserve their dignity and superiority.



People to whom God will not talk on the Judgement Day

Imam Muslim relates from God's Messenger, who said:

> There are three sorts of people whom God will not, on the Last Day, talk to, pay attention to, and purify; and for them is a painful torment: those who 'trail their robes', those who remind those they have favoured of their favours, and those who try to sell their goods by false oaths.

The hadith begins with *thalathatun* (three), meaning any three, unnamed, unworthy of being named. In this way, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, signifies that such people may be met with anywhere, and that themselves and what they do are so despicable that Muslims should refrain from what they do.

Second, as their punishment, God will not address Himself to them in the next world. This is a most severe punishment, because 'speech' is, as stated in *sura al-Rahman*, one of the foremost and greatest favours of God to man. Besides, man will be in dire need of speaking on the Day of Judgement, when he will hurry to and fro trying to escape God's chastisement. Those three sorts of people will, however, be told that day: *Be you driven into it (the Fire)! And speak you not to Me*! (*al-Mu'minun*, 23. 108)

The Day of Judgement is a day when everyone will be completely occupied with his own troubles, and there will be no refuge except God. Everyone will hope that God may give some attention to him, to look with mercy upon him and purify him of all his sins. But those three sorts of people will have no hope of being purified and forgiven, since God Almighty will not acknowledge them.

In the hadith, the account of the punishment for those three sorts of people precedes the account of their sins. In this way, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, emphasizes the gravity of their sins and warns everybody to refrain from them. The first and most grievous of these sins is 'trailing one's robe', which signifies in the idiom of Arabic, arrogance.



What does arrogance really mean?

Arrogance means to contest with God for the rule of the earth. Man, though a weak and poor creature – so vulnerable as to be destroyed by a micro-organism, so powerless as to be incapable of giving life even to a blade of grass – is usually charmed by his own abilities and skills or position or wealth or apparent accomplishments and, is, in consequence, overcome by feelings of conceit and pride. Though created from a drop of contemptible 'water' and having no choice in the time and place of his birth, family, colour or race, and no power over the operative needs of his body – he is unable to, for example, overcome the commands of hunger, thirst and sleep – though man is, on account of his weakness, endowed by God with various talents and faculties, he attributes his accomplishments to himself and begins to contest with God for the ownership of the creation. His arrogance eventually blinds him to innumerable signs pointing to God's Existence, Unity and Absolute Sovereignty. Concerning this, the Qur'an says:

> Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of truth – I will turn them away from My signs: even if they see all the signs, they will not believe in them; even if they see the way of guidance and right conduct, they will not choose it for their way. For they rejected Our signs, and gave no heed to them. (*al-A'raf*, 7.146)



Reminding someone of the favor one has done to him

After arrogance, to remind someone of the favour one has done to him is mentioned as a grave sin. It is no doubt closely related to arrogance, for the one who appropriates as his own the things – wealth, ability and the like – that God has bestowed on him, tends to commit it. If, by contrast, one sincerely regards all that he has as a gift from God, one becomes grateful to God, who enables him to do someone a favour, and, what is more, he comes to feel indebted to the one he has done a favour to, because he has gained spiritual reward due to him. The hadith thus encourages people to disinterested generosity and altruism, concerning which God's Messenger also declares:

> The generous are near to God, near to Paradise, and near to people, and distant from Hell. The miserly, however, are distant from God, distant from Paradise, and distant from human beings, but near to Hell.



Deception in trade

Islam decisively prohibits deception in trade. According to the laws of Islam, the seller is obliged to disclose any defect in his goods for sale. Swearing by God is also prohibited, especially in transactions. If a seller tries to sell his goods by telling lies or making false oaths, or to stir up demand for them by swearing by God, this is also a great sin deserving severe punishment. This sin is, again, closely linked to the two mentioned before it, for it usually originates in miserliness and one's lack of recognition of God. Also, these three sins are, besides being interconnected with unbelief in, and distrust of, God, poisonous for social life, and indicative of weak character. Hence, the severity of their punishment.



Guarding one's chastity and holding one's tongue

Imam Bukhari records in his *Sahih* that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

> Whoever guarantees to me what is between his lips and what is between his legs, I will guarantee him Paradise.

As everybody knows, speech is one of the greatest favours of God. So, a man should use his tongue in good and useful acts. He should recite the Qur'an; he should pray; he should always tell the truth and enjoin the good and forbid the evil. He should always be modest and well-mannered in the words he uses. Also, he should restrain his tongue from uttering bad things – telling lies, bad language, slander, and backbiting, etc. One should be very careful about the tongue, for, as 'Ali said: 'Your word is dependent on you until you utter it, but once you utter it, you will be dependent on it.'

Like holding one's tongue, controlling one's lust is also very important in attaining human perfection and deserving Paradise. God Almighty has endowed man with many faculties and impulses so that he might evolve spiritually by restraining them and channelling them into good deeds and virtues, and thereby rising to 'the highest of the high'. By struggling against carnal desires and striving to satisfy them in lawful ways, a man may attain the rank of sainthood and gain superiority over angels, since angels have no carnal desires and therefore no struggle against temptations, they do not evolve spiritually. However, because of his essential duality, man travels between 'the lowest of the low' —

to become even more wretched than Satan — and 'the highest of the high', to surpass even angels.

Since Islam bans or blocks up the ways leading to forbidden acts, one should refrain from such acts as displaying one's beauties and staring at the opposite sex, and also being alone with someone of the opposite sex in a private place such as may encourage illicit relationships. Like holding one's tongue, this also requires strong will-power, self-discipline and continuous struggle against the carnal self. Even though it seems, at first sight, too difficult, it will give one great spiritual pleasure as the pleasure of labour and struggle lies in labour and struggle themselves, and consequently make one deserving of Paradise.



Actions through which God forgives sins

Muslim records God's Messenger to have said:

> Listen! Shall I guide you to the things through which God blots out sins and elevates you to higher ranks? 'Please, do so, God's Messenger', the Companions said. The Prophet continued: Doing *wudu* as correctly as possible even in the most adverse conditions, walking to the mosque for each prayer, and expecting the next one after performing the one before. This is the *ribat*, this is the *ribat*.

The hadith begins with 'Listen!' to draw attention to the importance of what is going to be said. What the Prophet attaches so much importance to in this hadith is the five daily prayers.



Importance of the daily prescribed prayers

The prescribed prayer is the pillar of the religion, without which religion cannot be maintained. When it is performed correctly, it prevents a believer from all kinds of immoralities and indecencies. It is also a sacred ladder, through which a Muslim can rise high to the Presence of God. So, in order to begin to climb this ladder, a believer should do wudu, ritual ablution, in the best way possible. From the first step towards wudu, a believer begins to gain reward. While washing the parts of his body that he must wash in wudu, he is relieved of the stress of daily life and cleansed of his sins. The wudu performed in difficult circumstances, for example, in severe cold, gives greater exhilaration.

The call to prayer, *adhan*, is, in essence, the call for believers to enter the Presence or Court of God, and a call to prosperity in both worlds. Wudu is the preparation which a believer must make before entering this Presence. By performing the supererogatory prayer before the prescribed one, the believer completes his preparations and through it gets the permission from the aide-de-camp of the Owner of the Court, that is, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. When the muazzin (caller to prayer) announces the beginning of the prayer with almost the same words as adhan, he enters the Presence with utmost respect and reverence and converses with the Unique Owner of the whole universe and petitions Him for his needs and desires. This is the prayer which a believer performs five times a day. Through the prayer, his sins are blotted out and his potential to commit sins is changed into the 'seeds' of 'blessed trees of good and virtues'. There is, however, a condition for obtaining this result. The prayer must be performed with utmost sincerity, with pure intention of gaining God's good pleasure, and in awareness of being in the Presence of the Creator and Owner of the whole universe, who is the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing, the All-Hearing, and the All-Overwhelming.



What does *ribat* mean ?

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, describes the prescribed prayer as *ribat*. *Ribat* means one's

dedication to something, as well as watching guards at the frontier. It is mentioned in the holy Qur'an as, for example, in the following verses:

> O you who believe! Persevere in patience and vie in such perseverance; and be alert and prepared for jihad; and fear God, so that you may prosper. (*Al 'Imran*, 3.200)

> Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including horses dedicated to war. (*al-Anfal*, 8.60)

In the first of the verses, *ribat* is used in the meaning of being alert and prepared; in the second, dedicated. By describing the prayer as ribat, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, draws attention to the value and importance of struggling in the way of God and also to the place the prescribed prayer holds in the religion and in the life of a believer. In another hadith, he calls the latter 'the greater jihad', and the former 'the lesser jihad'. In order to be successful in the former, a believer must be very attentive in performing the latter. Besides, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, also emphasizes, by describing the prescribed prayer as ribat, that one should dedicate one's life to Divine worship and organize it according to the prayer; he should arrange his schedule around the five daily prayers. He should always be alert to perform his prayers without any neglect and with full attention; after he prays, he should be in the expectation of the next one. When performed in this way, the prescribed prayers will purify him of all his sins and, more than that, prevent him from committing any sins. They will then be, as another hadith says, like a miraj, the ascension to the Presence of God.



The invaluable awards to be given to the righteous

As related by Bukhari, God's Messenger said:

> God says: 'I have prepared for my righteous servants such things that neither eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, nor minds have imagined, them.'



Paradise and being righteous

Paradise is the place of surprises. The Qur'an tells us of the bounties of Paradise using names familiar to us, so as to make them comprehensible to us. Whereas, as Ibn 'Abbas pointed out to interpret the Qur'anic verse, *They are given things in similitude* (*al-Baqara*, 2.25), the bounties of Paradise are particular to Paradise in nature and taste, although they are, in appearance, like their counterparts in the world. The believers will be rewarded in Paradise with ever-renewed bounties and, above all, they will observe God free from any qualitative and quantitative dimensions. An instant of this observation will surpass, in delight and blessing, thousands of years of life in Paradise. And, being the greatest of the bounties of Paradise, God will be pleased with believers for ever and never be angry with them.

In order to deserve Paradise, one should be righteous. Righteousness means being upright in all one's deeds and doing everything intact, without any defect or fault. A righteous believer never tells lies, never deceives anybody, and is completely reliable. God is confident that he performs his religious duties as carefully as possible, and refrains from all His prohibitions. All the creatures, including human beings, animals and plants, are also confident that he never does them any harm; whatever he does, he does it in full awareness that God Almighty is overseeing him. Since he has gained the good pleasure of his Lord, he is included in those for whom God says in the hadith in question, 'My righteous servants'. That is, he is among those servants whom God loves and, because He loves them, 'He is their eyes with which they see, their ears with which they hear, their hands with which they hold, and their feet on which they walk'.

God multiplies the good deeds of His servants and gives, in certain circumstances, as many as millions of rewards for each one of them. So, they will meet in Paradise such bounties as they never imagined while in the world.



Paradise and Hell

In a hadith related by Bukhari and Muslim, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, says:

> Paradise is surrounded by troubles and tribulations, and Hell is folded in pleasures.

Paradise and Hell are, in essence, each a blessing for man, for man refrains from the prohibitions of God for fear of Hell, and performs His commands in the hope of Paradise. However, it requires self-discipline and a strict intellectual and spiritual training to be saved from the punishment of Hell and to deserve the bounties of Paradise.

The Qur'an says that *human beings are tempted by love of the opposite sex, of children, of hoarded treasures of gold and silver, of splendid mounts, cattle and plantations* (*Al 'Imran*, 3.14). Man has a natural attachment to life and all its pleasures. Hell is an abode of torments in the attractive setting of all those enticing lures and pleasures. If man is captivated by these pleasures and lives to satisfy them in any way possible, he is lured towards Hell. Man easily reaches Hell as its path goes through worldly attractions of every kind.

As for Paradise, it is surrounded by, or the route to it goes through, troubles and tribulations. In order to reach it, man, first of all, must struggle with his carnal self so that he won't be distracted by worldly attractions. It should be known that the way to Hell is part of the way to Paradise. Man must travel all the way to Hell without allowing any of its attractions to seduce him. This requires self-discipline and continuous struggle against the temptations of the world combined with the desires of his carnal self. Whenever he is invited by the enjoyments and luxuries of the world like fame, wealth and positions and posts, he must struggle to restrict himself to the boundaries set by Divine Commandments. He must continue to carry out his duties like praying, fasting, alms-giving, and (if possible) pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, and fair-dealing, honesty, truthfulness, kindness to the poor, the needy and orphans, and enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. He must also refrain from deception, usury, gambling, drinking alcohol, backbiting, hypocrisy and every form of injustice. He should not think that he will be left without being tested. *God will test him with afflictions and something of fear and hunger, and loss in goods or lives or in the fruits of his toil and earnings* (the Qur'an, 2.155). In order to reach Paradise, he should equip himself with both perseverance in bearing the afflictions, performing the obligations, and refraining from sins, and thanking God for all His bounties and blessings. All of these virtuous acts are detestable to man's carnal self. In sum, all the arguments summarized above are expressed in this concise saying of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings:

Paradise is surrounded by troubles and tribulations, and Hell is folded in pleasures.



Fearing God and refraining from destructive acts

Imam Tirmidhi relates that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

> I counsel you to fear God and to give obedience even if a black slave becomes your leader. Verily he among you who lives long enough will see great controversy, so you must keep to my Sunna and the Sunna of the rightly-guided Caliphs — cling to them stubbornly. Beware of newly invented matters in religion, for every invented matter is an innovation and every innovation is going astray and every going astray is in Hellfire.





What does *taqwa* mean?

The Arabic word translated here as 'fear of God' is *taqwa*. Derived from *wiqaya*, meaning protection, *taqwa* means to be in the safe-keeping or protection of God. This has two aspects. The first is that a man fears God and obeys Him by performing His commands and refraining from His prohibitions. The second aspect of *taqwa* is that, by studying nature and life and discovering God's laws controlling them, people find scientific knowledge and order their lives. The establishment of sciences depends upon the discovery of these laws. In order to be under the safe-keeping of God, the true religion and sciences should be combined, for they are two faces or two expressions of a single truth. According to Muslim sages and scholars, the universe where God's laws issuing from His Attributes of Will, Destiny and Power are operative, is 'the created Qur'an', and the Qur'an, which is the collection of the Divine laws issuing from God's Attribute of Speech, is 'the composed universe' or 'the universe in words'.

The second point which the hadith emphasizes is that believers should refrain from disobedience to their government unless it is absolutely necessary. Without a leader, a community is like the beads of a rosary scattered everywhere, and social and political conflicts usually result in anarchy and destruction. In addition to this, the hadith points to a truth which even modern democracies cannot grasp. Islam does not permit racial discrimination, and therefore an emancipated black slave could be the leader of the Muslim umma. Islamic history is filled with examples of this: many great saints, administrators and scholars have appeared among black people and been respected and obeyed by Muslims.



Following the example of the Prophet, upon him be peace

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, draws attention, as a third point, to his Sunna. He is the most excellent example to be followed in all aspects of life, until the Last Day. Following his example guarantees that Islam retains its original purity. Any deviation from the Prophet's way will certainly result in social and doctrinal splits and new importations to Islam, which God declared *He had perfected* (the Qur'an, 5.3). Adherence to the way of the first four Caliphs, may God be pleased with them, is another guarantee of the unity of Muslims and the maintenance of Islam. This hadith also contains a prediction, that the first four of his successors would be 'rightly-guided'; that disobedience to them would cause internal splits, as later proved to be true by the uprisings during the caliphate of 'Uthman and 'Ali.



A believer is one with insight and prudence

Bukhari and Muslim relate God's Messenger to have said:

A believer is not bitten twice from the same hole.

A believer has insight, perceptiveness and intelligence. He is a man of sound reasoning as well as a man of spiritual insight. The community of believers have, and should have, the same perceptiveness and they should always be aware of the dangers which might befall them. They may be deceived once, but through insight and awareness which belief provides, they cannot, and should not, be deceived twice. This hadith contains a significant warning for the Muslims of today, who have been deceived for centuries by the unbelievers of the West and the hypocrites (Communists) of the East. It is time for them to take control of their own affairs and to review the quality of their belief once more.



Human beings are like mineral ores to be wrought

The following hadith, which is recorded by Bukhari and Muslim, calls educationalists to re-evaluate their methods:

> Human beings are like the ore of silver or gold. Those who are promising and in leading positions in unbelief are better than the others (excel the others in virtue) when they accept Islam and acquire a good understanding of it.

This hadith is very significant, especially, with respect to education. A good education demands, on the part of educators, insight and perceptiveness, as the Qur'an quotes God's Messenger to have said:

> 'This is my way: I call unto God with insight and sure knowledge –- I and those who follow me.' (*Yusuf*, 12.108)

Insight implies knowing the character, potential and shortcomings of each individual. Human beings are not all alike in character, capacity, ambitions and tastes. Among them are those who contain, so to speak, coal or copper or silver, or gold or diamond. So, the first step in providing good education is to recognize individual potentialities, and then comes the stage of developing them. Just as you cannot obtain gold from a coal-mine, neither can you develop a man with the potentiality of 'copper', to become 'gold'. Conversely, if you apply to 'gold ore' the process for extracting 'copper', you will waste a talent.

We should also note that a man with great potentialities distinguishes himself wherever he is. Because of this, those who are, as 'Umar was, in the forefront of unbelief, usually come into leading positions after they convert to Islam, provided their potential for virtue is refined and developed fully in the 'crucible' of Islam.



God never neglects to chastise oppressors

In another hadith, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

> Surely God grants the wrongdoer, the oppressor, a reprieve, but once He seizes him, He utterly destroys him.

Then, he recited this verse:

> Such is the chastisement of your Lord when He chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous, indeed, and severe is His chastisement (*Hud*, 11.102).

God gives some respite to wrongdoers, a chance to repent and amend. If they persist in wrongdoing and do not improve themselves, then God's punishment is severe.

Wrongdoers are sometimes a 'sword of God', with which God punishes the sinful. Often Muslims become the target of wrongdoing powers, when they deviate from the truth and fail to perform Divine Commandments. In order not to defer the trial of Muslims for their sins to the Day of Judgement, God usually punishes them in this world. For example, when they were split into many factions struggling with each other, nine centuries ago, they were exposed to the Mongol invasion and massacre. Likewise, they tasted the bitterness of an overall defeat and subjugation during and after the First World War as a result of their failure to practice Islam in their lives and of their surrender, intellectual, spiritual and material, to the West. However, every misfortune befalling Muslims is, on account of being a result of sinfulness, an occasion and means for self-purification and Divine forgiveness, and the beginning of a new, more splendid revival. So, the near future will witness, by God's Will, the collapse of wrongdoing powers and a magnificent

revival of Islam and the Muslim world.



The people whom God will shade under "His shade" on the Day of Resurrection

In an authentic Tradition, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, says:

> Seven (groups) of people: God will shade them under His shade on the Day when there will be no shade except His: the just ruler; the young man who has grown up in worship of God, may He be glorified; the man greatly attached to mosques; the two persons who love each other for God's sake, and meet and then leave each other because of this love; the man who refuses the invitation of a beautiful woman of rank, saying, ‘I fear God’; the man who spends in the way of God so secretly that when he gives in charity to the one on his left, the one on the right does not see it; and the man whose eyes fill with tears when he mentions God in seclusion.

People will be drowned in sweat up to their necks under the heat of the Day of Judgement. Those who wish for His shade, must strive and this hadith explains how.

Justice is the foundation of social life and a just ruler is a rare occurrence. Holy and blessed indeed is a young man who restrains his carnal desires and devotes himself to the worship of God. Designing one’s life to fit the times of the daily prayers is a laudable virtue pleasing to God Almighty. Another important quality is that, especially in a world of individualism and selfishness, people love each other for God’s sake and regard the earth as a ‘cradle of brotherhood’. Chastity, refraining from illicit intercourse, needs self-discipline and is so meritorious as to elevate one to ‘the highest of the high’. Alms-giving purely for God’s sake and without showing off is a good deed to which Islam gives almost as much encouragement as belief and the prescribed prayer. Meditation and continuous supervision of one’s deeds, accompanied by tears shed for the fear of God, prevent one from committing sins and make him worthy of Paradise.



Because of the universality of his mission, Prophet Muhammad has some distinctions

God is kind to, and has favours for, everyone; whatever people have, it is from God. Nevertheless, He bestowed some special favours on each Prophet and community according to the dictates of the time. For example, Adam was favoured with knowledge of the ‘names’, that is, the keys to all branches of knowledge. Noah was endowed with steadfastness and perseverance. Abraham was honoured with intimate friendship with God and being the father of numerous Prophets. Moses was given the capability of administration and exalted through being the direct addressee of God, and Jesus was distinguished with patience, tolerance and compassion. All the Prophets have, however, some share in the praiseworthy qualities mentioned, but each of them surpasses, on account of his mission, the others in one or more than one of those qualities.

As for the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, he has all the qualities mentioned above, except being the father of Prophets, and in addition, he has, because of the universality of his mission, a distinction in the following five ways.

As related by Bukhari, he says:

> I have been given five things which were not given to anybody before me: God helps me by implanting fear in the heart of my enemies at a distance of one month’s walk; earth has been made a place of worship and means of cleaning for me, so whenever the time of a prescribed prayer comes, any member of my community may perform it wherever he is (indoors or outdoors); spoils of war have been made lawful for me, although they were not lawful for anyone before me; I have been given the right to

> intercede (with God on behalf of believing people), and, while every Prophet (before me) was sent to his people exclusively, I have been sent to the whole of mankind.

It is possible to deduce the following things from this hadith:

a. Prophethood is absolutely a Divine favour, which God bestows on whomever He wishes.

b. The five things mentioned in the hadith are particular to the Muslim Ummah exclusively.

c. To implant fear in the hearts of enemies at a great distance depends on the maintenance of the utmost sincerity and strict devotion to the cause of God, as was witnessed in the Happy Time of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and his true successors in later times.

d. Islam does not recognize any intermediaries in worship between God and the servant, and therefore there has not been in Islam a church, an organized, professional clergy. However, besides saintly persons who may be given the right of intercession for certain Muslims by God on the Day of Judgement, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, will enjoy the right of all-inclusive intercession for believing members of every ummah.

e. The spoils of war, forbidden to the previous communities as a means of trial, are lawful for the Muslims, because they are charged with struggling in the way of God until the Last Day, and conveying the Message to the remotest corners of the world.

f. While the mission of the previous Prophets had been restricted to a certain people and time, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was sent as a mercy for all the worlds.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE PROPHETS ARE INFALLIBLE

The meaning of infallibility

Infallibility is one of the necessary attributes of the Prophets. The Arabic word translated 'infallibility' is *'ismah*, meaning protecting or saving and defending. The word is used in the Qur'-an in a variety of derived forms. For example, during the Flood, when the Prophet Noah invited his son to board his ship, the latter replied: *I will betake myself to some mountain; it will save me from the water*. Noah responded to his son using the active participle of the word: *Today there is not a 'saving one' from the command of God* (*Hud*, 11.43).

The wife of the 'Aziz of Egypt, whose name is mentioned as Potiphar in the Bible, uses the same word in, *I did seek to seduce him but he firmly 'saved himself' guiltless* (*Yusuf*, 12.32). The Qur'an calls believers to hold fast to the 'rope of God', that is, the Qur'an and the religion of Islam, using the same word in a different form: *Hold fast all together to, and 'protect' (against being divided) by, the rope of God* (*Al 'Imran*, 3.103). Again, we see the same word in the verse, *God will 'defend (protect)' you from people* (*al-Ma'idah*, 5.67).

Are the Prophets infallible? If so, why?

The infallibility of the Prophets is an established fact based on reason and tradition.

Reason requires the infallibility of the Prophets, upon them all be peace, because:

As already explained, the Prophets came to convey to people the Message of God. If we liken this Message or the Divine Revelation to light or pure water, as the Qur'an itself does (*al-Ra'd*, 13. 17; *al-Nur*, 24.35), it is absolutely necessary and indispensable to the nature of the Revelation that both the Archangel Gabriel who brought the Revelation, and the Prophet himself who conveyed it to people, should be absolutely pure. Otherwise, that Divine light, the Revelation, would have been extinguished or dimmed, or that 'pure water' polluted. Every falling off is an impurity, a dark spot, in the heart. Like Gabriel, the heart or soul of the Prophet is like a 'polished mirror' through which the Divine Revelation is reflected to people, or a 'cup' from which people quench their thirst for that pure 'Divine water'. Any black spot on the mirror would absorb a ray of that light; a single drop of mud would be enough to make the water unclear. This would mean that the Prophets did not – God forbid such a thought! – convey the whole of God's Message. Whereas, in truth, they performed their duty perfectly and left nothing of the Message unconveyed. This is clear from the following verses of the Qur'an:

> O Messenger! Convey what has been sent to you from your Lord. If you did not, you would not have fulfilled His mission. And God will defend you from people. Certainly, God guides not the unbelieving people. (*al-Ma'ida*, 5.67)

> Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My favour upon you, and I have chosen and approved for you Islam as religion. (*al-Ma'ida*, 5.3)

Secondly, people learn from the Prophets all the commandments and principles concerning belief and conduct. In order that people should learn these commandments in their pristine purity and truth and as perfectly as possible to secure their happiness and prosperity in both worlds, the Prophets must, first, represent, and, then, present them without any faults or defects, for they are guides and good examples for people to follow, as explicitly stated in the Qur'an:

> You have indeed in the Messenger of God a beautiful pattern, an excellent example, for anyone who aspires after God and the Last Day, and who engages much in the remembrance of God. (*al-Ahzab*, 33.21)

> There is for you an excellent example in Abraham and those with him – there was indeed in them an excellent example for you – for those who aspire after God and the Last Day. (*al-Mumtahina*, 60. 4,6)

Despite his utmost care not to do anything contrary to Islam and not even to say a single word which is not sanctioned by God, if a Prophet were to utter an untrue word, he would repent for a lifetime, or even longer. It is narrated that the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, will direct to Moses those who will appeal to him to intercede for them on the Day of Judgement saying he cannot as he spoke allusively three times in his life.1 Although it is not a sin to make an 'indirect' reference to the truth when it is more appropriate rather than being direct, Abraham's repentance of his three allusions will continue in the Hereafter.

Thirdly, the Qur'an commands believers to obey all the orders or prohibitions of the Prophet without exception, and emphasizes that it is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by God and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision (*al-Ahzab*, 33.36). It also warns believers that what falls to them when God and His Messenger have given a judgement is only to say, 'We have heard and obeyed' (al-Nur, 24.51). Absolute obedience to a Prophet means that the Prophet is right in all his commands and prohibitions.

Prophethood is so great a favour that all the Prophets bore unbearable pains in fulfilling the duty of thanksgiving and were always worried about not having worshipped God sufficiently. The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, often implored God using the following words:

> Glory be to You, we have not been able to know You as Your knowledge requires, O Known One.

> Glory be to You, we have not been able to worship You as Your worship requires, O Worshipped One.

The Qur'anic verses which are sometimes mistakenly understood to reprimand certain Prophets for some faults of theirs, or to mean the Prophets seek God's forgiveness for some sin of theirs, should be considered from this point of view. Besides, God's forgiveness does not always mean that a sin has been committed. The Qur'anic words of 'afw – 'pardon', and maghfirah – 'forgiveness', also mean 'special favour and kindness and Divine dispensation in respect to the lightening or the overlooking of a religious duty', as in the following verses:

> If any is forced (to eat of them) by hunger, with no inclination towards transgression, God is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (*al-Ma'ida*, 5.3)

> If... you find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For God is All-Pardoning and Oft-Forgiving. (*al-Nisa'*, 4.43)



Degrees of sins and pardoning

Fifthly, sins and pardoning have different degrees:

1. Sins committed by not obeying the religious commandments, and the forgiveness thereof;

2. Sins committed by disobeying God's laws of creation and life, and the forgiveness thereof;

3. Sins in respect of behaving against the rules of good manners or courtesy (adab), and the forgiveness thereof.

A fourth type which is not a sin, is doing something good but not the best, a failure in doing perfectly what is required by the love of, and nearness to, God. This is what some of the Prophets may have done, so it is not a sin in our normal usage of the word for something deserving of Divine punishment.



Tradition also proves the Prophets' infallibility

Tradition also proves the Prophets' infallibility. God says in the Qur'an concerning the Prophet Moses:

> I cast love over you from Me (and made you comely and loveable) in order that you might be brought up under My eye. (*Ta Ha*, 20.39)

The Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, was brought up by God Himself and prepared for the mission of Messengership. Therefore, it is inconceivable that he may have committed a sin at any time in his life.

The same is true of all the other Prophets. For example, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, says of Jesus: Satan could not touch Jesus and his mother at his birth. Jesus was protected from birth until his elevation to the Presence of God, as we also read in the Qur'an:

> (Mary) pointed to him [the babe}. They said: 'How can we talk to one who is an infant in the cradle?' He (Jesus) said: 'I am indeed a servant of God: He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet. And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. He has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or a wretched rebel. So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I will be raised up to life again.' (*Maryam*, 19.29-33)

Jesus, like all the other Prophets, was protected from all kinds of sin from his birth. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, intended in his childhood to attend two wedding ceremonies at different times but, on each occasion, he was overpowered by sleep which prevented him from attending. Likewise, in his youth he helped his uncles with the restoration of the Ka'ba by carrying stones. Since the stones hurt his shoulders, his uncle, 'Abbas, advised him to hoist the garment covering the lower part of his body, onto his shoulder to carry the stones on. He just did what he was advised to do, leaving some of the upper part of his legs uncovered, when he fell on his back with his eyes staring fixedly. An angel appeared and warned him that what he had done was improper, saying: 'This is not befitting for you'. For the day was to come when he would order people to be well-mannered and observe Divinely ordained standards of conduct, including covering the thighs.



The best of humankind are the righteous and repentant

God's Messenger says that *all the children of Adam make faults and err, and the best of those who make faults and err are the repentant*. This implies that man is fallible by nature, but it does not mean that all of mankind are 'condemned' to erring howsoever. Whether by God's Will and special protection or, as will be explained below, by His showing the way to be free from errors or sins, even the greatest of saints who continue the Prophetic mission of guiding people may be infallible to some degree.

God promises to protect the believers who fear Him, and to endow them with sound judgement to enable them to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and between right and wrong:

> O you who believe! If you fear God, He will establish in you a Criterion (to judge between right and wrong), purify you of all your evils, and forgive you. God is of grace unbounded. (*al-Anfal*, 8.29)

God is the protector of true believers



God made a covenant with the believers that if they obey Him, assist His cause and strive to exalt His Word, by proclaiming His religion, He will help them and make their feet firm in the religion, protecting them against all kinds of deviation (*Muhammad*, 47.7). God's protection of believers from their enemies and against committing sins has been made dependent on their support of Islam and struggle to spread it all over the world so that only God is worshipped and no partners are associated with Him either in belief or worship or the creation and rule of the universe. If believers fulfil their covenant with God, God will fulfil His covenant with them (*al-Baqara*, 2.40). If, by contrast, they break their promise, God will not make them successful (*al-Isra'*,17.8).



How does God protect His believing servants against sins?

God protects His servants against sins in different ways. He may put some obstacles in their way to sins so they do not sin, or He may establish a 'warner' in their hearts, or, if all the other means prove of no use, He may cause, for example, their legs to be broken or their hands unable to hold or grasp. Or He may warn one by putting a verse in his mouth, as He did with a young man during the Caliphate of 'Umar, may God be pleased with him.

The young man was so strict and attentive in his worship that he performed all his prayers in the mosque. A woman lived on his way to the mosque and tried her hardest for several days to seduce him into making love with her. Although the young man resisted her alluring gestures, the moment came when he took a few steps towards the woman's house. Just at this point, he felt he was reciting this verse:

> Those who fear God, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring God to remembrance, and lo! they see (aright). (*al-A'raf*, 7.201)

In the face of this Divine warning, the young man was so ashamed before God of what he was about to do, and felt so overwhelmed by his Compassionate Lord's preventing him from committing a sin, that he died. When 'Umar was informed of the incident a few days later, he went to his grave and shouted: 'O young man. *For him who fears the time when he will stand before his Lord, there will be two gardens*!' (*al-Rahman*, 55.46). A voice from the grave, whether belonging to the young man himself or an angel on his behalf, replied: 'O Commander of the Believers: God has granted me the double of what you say!'

This is God's protection of His sincere servants. He says in one of His Revelations outside the Qur'an:

> My servant cannot draw near to me through something else more lovable to Me than the obligations I have enjoined upon him. Apart from those obligations, he continues to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts of worship, until I love him. When I love him, I will be his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his hands with which he grasps, and his feet on which he walks. If he asks Me something, I will immediately give it to him; if he seeks refuge in Me from something, I will protect him from it.

God guides His true servant to good and protects him from all kinds of evil. The servant wills and does what is good and refrains from wickedness. He asks God what is good and whatever he asks is provided for him; he seeks refuge in God from what is bad, and whatever he seeks refuge in God from, he is protected against it.



The Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an

All the Prophets were infallible. They never committed a sin, minor or major, and their lives were spent doing virtuous deeds. Although God sent numerous Prophets to mankind, the Qur'an specifically mentions only twenty-eight of them. I think it will be proper here to count them in the words of Ibrahim Haqqi, an eighteenth-century Turkish saint and religious scholar, who was also an expert in anatomy and astronomy:

> Some have regarded it a religious injunction to learn the names of the Prophets.
>
> God informed us of twenty-eight of them in the Qur'an:
>
> Adam, Enoch, Noah, Hud and Salih;
>
> Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, who was a sacrifice for God.
>
> Jacob, Joseph, Shu'ayb, Lot and John the Baptist;
>
> Zachariah and Aaron, who was the brother of Moses, who spoke to God.
>
> David, Solomon, Elijah and Job;
>
> Elisha, a kin of Jesus, who was a spirit from God.
>
> Dhul-Kifl and Jonah, who was certainly a Prophet.
>
> The seal of them is the Beloved of God — Muhammad, Messenger of God.
>
> Scholars disagree on the Prophethood of Ezra, Luqman and Dhul-Qarnayn.
>
> Some regard them as Prophets, while others as saints of God.



REMOVING DOUBTS ABOUT THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE PROPHETS

Introduction

There are some verses in the Qur'an which seem, at first sight, to reprimand certain Prophets for some of their actions, or which give the image that a Prophet may commit a sin in the normal usage of the word. Before clarifying specific examples in this respect in order to remove all the doubts about the infallibility of the Prophets, it may be appropriate to acquit the Prophets of the calumnies against them of the present versions of the Bible. These disgusting calumnies, whose existence is inconceivable in an uncorrupted Divine Scripture, are certain, like many other additions and distortions, to have found their way into the Bible in later times.



Accusations of the Bible against the Prophets

In the book of *Genesis*, 19, 30-38, it is written that the two daughters of the Prophet Lot got their father to drink wine and then lay with him so as to become pregnant by him. This is obviously the most disgusting of calumnies that could be uttered or written against a Prophet. Lot's people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorra were destroyed by God because of their immoralities, and Lot and his daughters were, according to the Bible itself, the only ones to be spared from that destruction on account of their belief, good conduct and decency. The crime of which the Bible accuses the Prophet Lot is worse than what his people were destroyed for.

In the book of *Genesis*, chapter 38, a story is mentioned in which Jacob's son, Judah, is supposed to have fornicated with the wife of his son. The woman gave birth, as a result of this fornication, to twin boys, and some of the Israelite Prophets were descended from them.

It is inconceivable that a Prophet should have committed fornication. Our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, explicitly declared that *there is not a single case of fornication in his lineage back to Adam*. He also stated that *all the Prophets are brothers descended from the same father*. Our Prophet is a descendant of Abraham, upon him be peace, as were Judah and the other Israelite Prophets, so it is impossible for any of them to be the child of an illicit intercourse, or — God forbid such a thought! — to have fornicated.

In the second book of *Samuel*, chapter 11, it is written that the Prophet David fell in love with the wife of one of his commanders and slept with her without marriage. According to the Bible, he also got the commander to be put in the front line where the fighting was fiercest and, after the death of the commander, he married his wife.

David, upon him be peace, is a Prophet who was given a Divine Scripture — the Psalms — and who is praised in the Qur'an for his sincere and profound devotion to God:

> Be patient at what they say, and remember Our servant David, the man of strength and abilities. For he ever turned to God in sincere devotion and submission. It was We that made the mountains declare, in unison with him, Our praises, at eventide and at the break of day, and the birds gathered (in assemblies): all with him did turn to Him (in profound devotion). We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and sound judgement (in speech and decision.) (*Sad*, 38.17-20)

Though a king, he lived a simple life by his own labour. He cried much out of fear of God and used to fast every other day. This kind of fast was recommended by our Prophet to some of his Companions who sought the most rewarding type of supererogatory fasting. Is it at all conceivable that such a noble Prophet could fornicate and plot the death of his commander in order to take his wife?

In the first Book of *Kings*, chapter 11, Solomon is blamed for having married many foreign women from the nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods,' and therefore of doing such evil as following the gods and goddesses (idols) of some other tribes.



The Qur'an absolves the Prophets from all the accusations against them in the Bible and exalts them

If the Qur'an had not been sent, we could not have known the truth about the previous Prophets. The Qur'an exalts them all as being sincere, devout and thankful servants of God. As it freed Jesus from the deification of Christians and the denial of the Jews and glorified God from Christians' attributing to Him sons and daughters, so too, it acquitted all the Israelite and non-Israelite Prophets of having committed the disgusting sins attributed to them in the Bible. It mentions Jesus as a spirit from God breathed into the Virgin Mary, Abraham as an intimate friend of God, Moses as one who spoke to God and Solomon as a king and a Prophet who prayed to Him humbly: *O my Lord! So order me that I may be grateful for your favours, which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please You; and admit me, by Your Grace, to the ranks of Your righteous servants* (*al-Naml*, 27.19). So, Solomon, besides never having worshipped anything other than God, never committed a sin and, despite being the greatest and most powerful of kings that ever lived, remained a humble servant of God until his death.

In addition to such calumnies against the Prophets, the Bible is full of assertions unbecoming to a Scripture. For example, it writes that although the Prophet Isaac wanted to bless his older son Esau, he mistakenly blessed Jacob instead, as a result of his wife Rebaka's trick (*Genesis*, 27). Also, the Bible claims that the Prophet Jacob wrestled with God, who appeared to him in the form of a man (*Genesis*, 32).



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

INDIVIDUAL EXAMPLES TO CLARIFY THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE PROPHETS

The lapses of the Prophets are not sins in the real sense of the word

A small minority of Muslim scholars have asserted that the Prophets may have committed sins of an insignificant type called *zalla*, meaning ‘error’ or ‘lapse’, and give, in order to prove their assertion, some examples from the lives of, for instance, Adam, Noah, Abraham and Joseph, upon them all be peace. Before elaborating their cases, it should be noted that even if we attribute some lapses to the Prophets, they are not sins in the meaning of disobedience to God’s Commandments. The Prophets tended to wait for Revelation when they had a question to judge. On rare occasions, however, it happened that they would exercise their own power of reasoning in order to give a judgement as they were the greatest of *mujtahid*s (jurists of the highest rank who can deduce laws from the principles established by the Qur’an and the Sunna). They might sometimes have erred in their judgements or decisions, but such errors, which were immediately corrected by God, can never be regarded as sins.

Secondly, the Prophets always sought God’s good pleasure in every instant of their lives and tried to obtain what was the best in a matter. If they had rarely missed the best but still caught what was better, this should not be regarded as a sin. For example, suppose a man has to make a choice: whether he will recite the whole of the Qur’an in ten days and give due attention to each verse, or he will finish the recitation in seven days in order to express his deep love of the Word of God. If that man takes the first option without knowing that God’s greater pleasure lies in the second, he will obviously not be regarded as having committed a sin. So, a Prophet’s preference of what is better instead of the best is not a sin, but because of his position before Him, God might sometimes reproach him mildly.

Now, we had better clarify some individual examples in the lives of certain Prophets.



a. The Prophet Adam, upon him be peace

As is known, Adam was in the Garden before his worldly life. While in the Garden, God commanded him and Eve not to eat of the fruit of a particular tree. Then, after they ate of it, they were expelled from the Garden and commanded to live on earth.



What was the the tree prohibited for Adam and Eve?

Although interpreters of the Qur'an have offered different views on what the prohibited fruit was, it was most probably human inclination towards the opposite sex. Satan approached Adam and Eve and argued that it was a tree of eternity and of a kingdom that would never decay, the fruit of which had been prohibited to them (*Ta Ha*, 20:120). Most probably knowing that they were mortal, Adam and Eve must have desired eternity through offspring. This can also be deduced from the verses: *Then Satan whispered to them so that he might manifest to them that which was hidden from them of their shame, and he said: 'Your Lord forbade you this tree only lest you should become angels or become immortals.' And he swore to them (saying): 'Truly, I am a sincere adviser to you.' Thus did he lead them by a deceit; and when they tasted of the tree their shame was manifest to them and they began to cover (by heaping) on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden*...(*al-A'raf*, 7. 20–2). The intuition of, and desire for, eternity are intrinsic to man.

Even if we accept Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit as a lapse, it is difficult to regard it as a deliberate or sustained disobedience, that is, a revolt against God, which might lead us to see the Prophets as fallible. First of all, Adam was not a Prophet while in the Garden. Secondly, this lapse of Adam was the result of not wilful disobedience, but merely some sort of forgetfulness. Concerning this, the Qur'an says:

> We had made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and we found on his part no firm resolve. (*Ta Ha*, 20.115)

Sins committed because of forgetfulness will not be accounted for in the Hereafter. The Prophet said:

> My community are exempted from being questioned about forgetting, unintentional errors, and what they are compelled to do, not of their will.

The Qur'an teaches us this prayer:

> Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error. (*al-Baqara*, 2.286)

Adam did not make this lapse deliberately. Although some have misinterpreted the verse above to suggest that Adam was not determined to fulfil the covenant God had made with him, the context does not allow such an interpretation. For Adam and Eve turned to God immediately after their lapse in sincere repentance and entreated Him, saying:

> Our Lord! We have wronged our own selves! If you forgive us not and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be among those who are lost. (*al-A'raf*, 7.23)



Destiny has a part in that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit or tree

Destiny had a part in Adam's lapse. God had destined him to be His vicegerent on earth, before his creation and settlement in the Garden. This is explicit in the Qur'an:

> Behold, your Lord said to the angels: 'I will make a vicegerent on earth.' They said: 'Will you make therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood, whilst we do celebrate Your praises and glorify You?' He said: 'I know what you know not.' (*al-Baqara*, 2.30)

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, also points to that truth, saying:

> Adam and Moses met each other in the Heaven. Moses said to Adam: 'You are the father of mankind, but you caused us to come down to earth from the Garden.' Adam replied to him: 'You are the one whom God addressed directly. Did you not see this sentence in the Torah: "Adam had been destined to eat of that fruit forty years before he ate of it?"
>
> After reporting this meeting, God's Messenger added three times: Adam silenced Moses.

The life of Adam in the Garden and the trial he underwent were preliminaries he had to pass through before his earthly life. He passed all the tests to which he was put and, being chosen and saved from being lost in the swamp of sins and deviation, was made a Prophet and honoured with being made the father of thousands of Prophets, including the pride of mankind – the Prophet Muhammad – and millions of saints:

> Then his Lord chose him; He relented towards him, and rightly guided him. (*Ta Ha*, 20.122)

b. The Prophet Noah, upon him be peace

The Prophet Noah called his people to the religion of God for nine hundred and fifty years. When his people insisted on unbelief and persisted in their wrongdoings, God ordered him to build an ark. After completing the construction of the ship, Noah embarked in it, upon God's command, of each kind two, male and female, and his family — except those against whom the Word (of punishment) had already gone forth, — and the believers (*Hud*, 11.40).

When the Ark was floating through the waves towering like mountains, Noah saw one of his sons separated from the believers and called out to him to get into the Ark, but his son rejected his call, saying: "I will betake myself to some mountain and it will save me from the water" (*Hud*, 11.43). When Noah saw his son drowning, he called out to God, saying:

> My Lord! My son is of my family! And Your promise is true and You are the Most Just of Judges! (*Hud*, 11.45)
>
> God Almighty replied to Noah:
>
> O Noah! He is not of your family. For his conduct is unrighteous. So ask not of me that of which you have no knowledge! I give you counsel lest you should act like the ignorant! (*Hud*, 11.46)

Some scholars have regarded the appeal of Noah to God as a sin. However, it is difficult to agree with them. For the Prophet Noah, who is mentioned in the Qur'an as one of the five greatest Prophets, described as being resolute and steadfast, thought his son to be a believer. It is well known that in the religion of God, it is essential to judge according to outward appearances. That is, if a man professes belief and apparently performs the religious duties of primary importance like the prescribed prayers and alms-giving (*zakat*), he is treated as a believer. It is for this reason that our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, treated the hypocrites as if they were Muslims. So, the son of Noah was most probably one who succeeded in hiding his unbelief until the Flood, for it was Noah himself who had prayed God beforehand that He should forgive him, his parents, and all who entered his house in faith, and all believing men and

believing women, and grant to the wrongdoers no increase but perdition (*Nuh*, 71:28).

God had accepted his prayer and ordered him to embark in the Ark also his family, except those against whom the Word (of punishment) had already gone forth. Noah's wife was among those who were drowned, but Noah did not appeal to God to save her, as he knew, or was informed beforehand, that she was an unbeliever. He must have thought his son to be a believer so that he felt the need to express, in a manner becoming to a Prophet, his astonishment that God had let him drown. To this, God replied, saying:

> He is not of your family. For his conduct is unrighteous. So ask not of me that of which you have no knowledge! I give you counsel lest you act like the ignorant! (*Hud*, 11.46)

The Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, was, like every other Prophet, kind-hearted and caring. Every Prophet sacrificed himself for the good of humanity and made tireless efforts so that they could be guided to truth and attain true happiness in both worlds. God says concerning the Last Prophet's attitude in this respect:

> You would nearly kill yourself to death, following after them, in grief, if they believe not in this Message. (*al-Kahf*, 18.6)

The Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, called his people to that Message for 950 years. He never showed signs of tiredness during this long period. It is natural for a Prophet, a father, to show disappointment when he comes to know that his son is among the unbelievers who have been condemned to punishment in both worlds. But, since God Almighty is the Most Just of Judges and the Most Compassionate of the Compassionate, the Prophet Noah immediately turned to Him and sought refuge with Him, lest he should ask Him for that of which he had no knowledge:

> O my Lord! I do seek refuge with you, lest I should ask You for that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You forgive me and have mercy on me, I should indeed be lost! (*Hud*, 11.47)

c. The Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace

Abraham was one of the greatest Prophets, one who was called 'the intimate friend of God'. God's Messenger took pride and pleasure in his connection with him, saying: *I am the one whose coming Abraham prayed for and Jesus gave glad tidings of, and I resemble my forefather Abraham more than anyone else*. He was thrown into fire because of his belief in One God, and the fire became, by God's Will and Power, coolness and a means of safety for him.



Abraham's argumentations against his people's idol-worshipping

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Abraham, like the other Prophets, never worshipped, nor thought of worshipping, idols in any phase of his life. Despite this fact, some erroneous and untrue stories have unfortunately found their way into some Qur'anic commentaries. They have come from a misunderstanding of the following verses:

> When the night covered him over, he saw a star: He said, 'This is my lord'. But when it set, he said, 'I love not those that set.' When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said, 'This is my lord'. But when it set, he said, 'Unless my Lord guided me, I would surely be among those who go astray'. When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said, 'This is my lord; this is the greatest (of all).' But when the sun set, he said: 'O my people! I am indeed free from your ascribing partners to God. For me, I have set my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, as a man of pure faith and one by nature upright, and I am not among those who associate partners with God'. (*al-An'am*, 6. 76–9)

These verses clearly show that Abraham tried, by way of analogy, to convince his people that none of the heavenly bodies was worthy to be believed in or worshipped as God. Historically, Abraham lived among the Chaldeans in northern Mesopotamia, a people very knowledgeable about heavenly bodies and who worshipped them along with many other idols. Abraham first argued with his father that the idols could not be worthy to worship, as explicitly stated in the verse preceding those cited above:

> Abraham once said to his father Azar: 'Do you take idols for gods? Surely I see you and your people in manifest deviation.' (*al-An'am*, 6. 74)

Since Azar was the maker of the idols for his people to worship, Abraham, upon him be peace, had started his mission by opposing him. After that, he turned his attention to his people to guide them to the truth. Since they had great knowledge of heavenly bodies, God would instruct him in matters concerning them and showed him the metaphysical realities behind them so that he might attain certainty of the highest degree with respect to the truths of belief and convince his people of their deviation:

> So also did We show Abraham the inner dimensions of, and the metaphysical realities behind, the heavens and the earth, that he might have certainty. (*al-An'am*, 6. 75)

While travelling in mind and heart through heavenly bodies, Abraham began by saying in front of his people that a star could not be God because it sets. Although the superstitious might read fortunes into it or attribute some influence to it, true knowledge shows that it rises and sets according to the laws authored by God, and its light is extinguished in the broader light of day, so worshipping it is futile.

Abraham took a second step in his analogy to guide his people to the truth and showed that, although looking brighter and bigger than the star, the moon could not be God either because, besides setting like the star, it changes its shape from hour to hour, and depends for its light on some other body. At this point, Abraham openly declared that he had already been guided by his Lord, and that those who did not worship Him alone were among those that went astray.

The last blow which Abraham struck was to show that the sun could not be worshipped as God either because, despite its size and light, it also disappears from sight, and therefore it was folly to worship created phenomena. After rejecting the worship of creation, Abraham declared his faith:

> I have set my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, as a man of pure faith and one by nature upright, and I am not among those who associate partners with God. (*al-An'am*, 6.79)

So, it is sheer illusion and a great mistake to infer from the verses above that Abraham took heavenly bodies as God in the early phase of his life.



Abraham's appealing to God to show him how He revives the dead

The second point regarded as a fault or lapse on the part of Abraham is that he appealed to God to show him how He revives the dead. Concerning this, the Qur'an says:

> Behold! Abraham said: 'My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead.' He said: 'Do you not believe?' He said: 'Yes indeed, but to set my heart at rest.' (*al-Baqara*, 2.260)

In a hadith, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, says that there are seventy thousand veils separating God from man. This implies that man's journey towards God is endless and people have different degrees of knowledge and understanding and varying capacities for spiritual and intellectual satisfaction. Since God Almighty is infinite, unbounded with all His Attributes and Names, each man can obtain only some knowledge of Him and attain

some degree of satisfaction according to his capacity. The Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, had one of the greatest capacities and therefore needed to increase in knowledge of God every day in order to get full spiritual satisfaction. The Prophets were, like every other human being, in constant spiritual and intellectual growth and, regarding each of their previous stages of growth as inadequate in knowledge of God and satisfaction, they incessantly pursued a further degree of conviction. For this reason, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, asked God's forgiveness about a hundred times a day and frequently entreated Him, saying:

> Glory be to You, we have not been able to know You as Your knowledge requires, O Known One!
>
> Glory be to You, we have not been able to worship You as Your worship requires, O Worshipped One!

Once, Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi encountered Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi and asked him:

> Who is greater? The Prophet Muhammad, who says, 'Glory be to You, we have not been able to know You as Your knowledge requires, O Known One !', or Bayazid al-Bistami, who says [in an instance of entranced ecstasy], 'Glory be to me, how exalted I am!'?

The reply which Mawlana gave is also a reply to those who dare to find fault with Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace:

> Both of these utterances show to what extent our Prophet is greater than Bayazid. For the heart or soul of our Prophet was like an ocean so deep and vast that it was impossible to be satisfied. But the soul of Bayazid was, in comparison with our Prophet's, like an ewer, easy to fill and quick to overflow.

In order to remove any possible doubt concerning Abraham's conviction, God's Messenger once said: *If Abraham's were a doubt, we are more liable to doubt than him.*



Abraham's allusions

In his whole life spent in constant struggle with unbelief and polytheism, the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, spoke allusively on only three occasions. That is, in order to either shun the harassment of unbelievers or explain to them a religious truth more simply, he chose to divert the attention of his addressees to something else by indirect reference to the truth. Since, however, some scholars have misinterpreted those allusions to be lies, I feel it is necessary to clarify them:

1. When his people wanted him to accompany them to their religious celebration, he cast a glance at the stars and said that he was sick.

Abraham was not bodily sick, but the grief was preying on his mind and soul that he might be associated with the falsehoods of his people. It was impossible for him to worship idols; rather, he was determined to destroy them. So, in order to avoid participating in their ceremonies, he told them that he was sick and when they had left him, he struck their idols down and broke them.

In saying he was sick, Abraham certainly did not lie, for what he meant was that he was sick of their idols and idol-worship. It is because he was sick of the idols, truly, that as soon as they departed, he turned to the idols and broke them. The Qur'an praises him for this deed:

> Verily among those who followed his (Noah's) way was Abraham. Behold, he came unto his Lord with a pure, sound heart. Behold, he said to his father and to his people, 'What is it that you worship? Is it a falsehood – gods other than God – that you desire? What then is your opinion of the Lord of the

> Worlds?' Then he cast a glance at the stars, and he said, 'I am indeed sick!' So they turned away from him, and departed. Then he turned to their gods and said, 'Will you not eat [of the offerings before you]? What is the matter with you that you speak not?' Then he turned upon them, striking them with might (and breaking them). (*al-Saffat*, 37.83-93)

2. The second allusion of Abraham is mentioned in the following verses:

> We bestowed on Abraham his rectitude before, and We were well acquainted with him. Behold! He said to his father and his people, 'What are these images, to which you are (so assiduously) devoted in worship?' They said, 'We found our fathers worshipping them'. He said, 'Indeed you have been in manifest deviation – you and your fathers.' They said, 'Have you brought us the truth, or are you one of those who jest?' He said, 'Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He who created them. And I am a witness [to this truth]. By God, I have a plan for your idols after you go away and turn your backs.' So he broke them to pieces, (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn to it. They said, 'Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some evil-doer!' They said, 'We have heard a youth talk of them: he is called Abraham.' They said, 'Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness.' They said, 'Are you the one who did this to our gods, O Abraham?' He said, 'Nay, he did it – this is their biggest one! Ask them, if they can speak!' (*al-Anbiya'*, 21.51-63)

Some think that Abraham told a lie by saying, 'Nay, he did it – this is their biggest one!' The truth is that Abraham is using here a biting irony. What Abraham wanted was precisely that the people should understand that things that do not speak and can be of neither any good or harm to them were not to be worshipped. He succeeded, and his people, dumbfounded by his reasoning, could find no way out other than throwing him into the fire to protect their 'gods'.

Abraham did not say that the idols had been broken by the biggest of them. Rather, in reply to their question, 'Are you the one that did this to our gods, O Abraham?', he said, 'He did it' and stopped – there is a significant stop in the reading of the verse – and then he continued: 'This is their biggest one!'. Therefore, by the phrase, 'He did it', he alluded to the one who broke the idols, but diverted the attention of the people to the biggest one by continuing, 'This is their biggest one!'

Once, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said to an old woman, *The old will not enter Paradise*.. When he saw that the old woman was distressed by his irony, he clarified: *Because they will enter it as young people*. This is, in one way, similar to what Abraham did for some important purpose, and it was not therefore a lie.

3. In a hadith, and also in the Bible, we read that Abraham, upon him be peace, wanted his wife, Sarah to say, if asked who she was, that she was his sister, not his wife. According to the Bible, Abraham did this because he would have been killed because of her. This too, is also not a lie, as the other allusions of Abraham mentioned above are not lies, in that, as declared in the Qur'an, all the believers are indeed brothers or sisters to each other.

In conclusion, Abraham, upon him be peace, never lied. If he had lied, he would certainly have been reproached by God, but there is not a single reference in the Qur'an to God having reproached him for lying. On the contrary, his allusions mentioned above are mentioned where he is praised in the Qur'an by God. For this reason, the Prophetic Tradition about those allusions should not be treated literally.



Abraham's prayer for his father

Abraham's father, Azar, was the man among his people who shaped idols out of wood or stones. Abraham started his mission by calling him to desist from idol-worship and turn towards God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. When he encountered the inexplicable opposition of his father, he left him, saying: 'I will pray for forgiveness for you,' and because of this promise, he asked God's pardon for him, saying, '*Forgive my father, for that he is one of those who go astray*!'(*al-Shu'ara*, 26.86).

Some have regarded Abraham's asking God's forgiveness for his father as a lapse, as his father was an unbeliever. However, it is difficult to regard it as a lapse. For, first of all, Abraham was a Prophet deputed by God to call people to the truth and salvation. Like every Prophet, he was so caring towards all of God's servants that he grieved himself to death if they did not follow God's way to happiness and salvation in both worlds. We can discern in the following verses to what extent he desired his father's guidance:

> (Also) mention in the Book (the story of) Abraham: He was a man of truth, a Prophet. Behold, he said to his father: 'My father, why worship you that which hears not and sees not, and can profit you nothing? My father, surely there has come to me the knowledge which has not reached you, so follow me; I will guide you to a straight, even way. O my father, serve not Satan, for Satan is a rebel against the Most Merciful. O my father, I fear lest a penalty afflict you from the Most Merciful, so that you become a friend to Satan.' (*Maryam*, 19.41-45)

It was Abraham's duty to call them to worship the One God regardless of their persistent rejection. Although the Qur'an openly stated that As to those who unbelieve, it is the same to them whether you warn them or not, for they will not believe (*al-Baqara*, 2.6), God's Messenger never gave up warning them. Besides calling his father to the truth, Abraham prayed for his father until, as stated in the Qur'an, it became clear to him that his father was an enemy to God. When Abraham was convinced that his father was an enemy to God, he dissociated himself from him (*al-Tawba*, 9.114). God Almighty mentions this not as a lapse on Abraham's part, but as a virtue, saying: For Abraham was most tender-hearted, forbearing. He also introduces Abraham's conduct as an excellent example to follow:

> There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him. They said to their people: 'We are clear of you and whatever you worship besides God. We have rejected you, and there has arisen enmity and hatred forever between us and you, unless you believe in God and Him alone.' But Abraham said to his father: 'I will pray for forgiveness for you, although I have no power (to get) anything on your behalf from God.' – 'Our Lord! In You we have put our trust, and to You we turn in repentance; to You is the final return.' (*al-Mumtahina*, 60.4)

As indicated above, Abraham's prayer for his father was because of a promise he had made to him (*al-Tawba*, 9.114), and when it became clear to him that his father was an enemy to God, he dissociated himself from him and gave up praying for his forgiveness.

It should finally be noted here that some interpreters of the Qur'an do not accept that Azar was the father of Abraham. Although it is not a defect on the part of Abraham to descend from an unbelieving father, for God Almighty brings forth the living out of the dead, and brings forth the dead out of the living (*Al 'Imran*, 3.27), the Qur'an always uses for Azar the word, *Ab*, meaning also uncle, step-father or foster-father or grandfather. Although the Prophet Abraham was prohibited to ask forgiveness for Azar, we see in the Qur'an that he asked forgiveness for his parents in his old age, saying: *Our Lord! Forgive me, my parents, and all believers on the day that the Reckoning will be established*' (*Abraham*, 14.41). In this prayer, he uses the word, *walid* for father, meaning the one who begets him. It is therefore a strong probability that Azar was not his father who begot him. According to the Bible, the real father of Abraham was Terah. However, God knows best.



d. The Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace

The Prophet Joseph is exalted in the Qur'an as an example of chastity. In his childhood, he was envied by his brothers and thrown into a well. A caravan passing by found him and later sold him as a slave to a high official, probably a minister, of the Egyptian court, whose name is mentioned in the Bible as Potiphar.

The Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, descended from a family of Prophets. When someone told God's Messenger that he was a noble man, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, alluded to this fact, saying:

The noble one, son of a noble one who is the son of a noble one who is the son of a noble one – this is Joseph, the son of Jacob, who is the son of Isaac, who is the son of Abraham, the intimate friend of God. Joseph was still a child in the well, when God revealed to him that he would one day tell his brothers the truth of what they had done (*Yusuf*, 12.15). Therefore, he was, from the beginning, closed, protected from any kind of vice.

Joseph, upon him be peace, was an exceptionally handsome young man when the lady of the house fell in love with him. In the words of the ladies of the capital city, quoted by the Qur'an, Joseph 'inspired her with violent love' (*Yusuf*, 12.30). In order to seduce him, she fastened the doors one day and called to Joseph, 'Now come, you (dear one)!' Joseph, whom God Almighty had granted knowledge, sound judgement and discernment, replied unhesitatingly: *God forbid! Truly my Lord has treated me honourably. Assuredly, wrongdoers never prosper* (*Yusuf*, 12.23).

The Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, had already attained the rank of *ihsan*, described by God's Messenger as 'one's worshipping God as if he were seeing God in front of him'. That is, he felt, at every instant of his life, that he was under the supervision of God Almighty. He was also one made sincere, pure-hearted and of pure intentions by God. Therefore, it was inconceivable that he would betray God's blessings on him by agreeing to what he was invited. If — God forbid — he had conceived of taking even a single step toward what the lady invited him to do, he would have been a wrongdoer. Or, if he meant his master by 'my lord', then he would still have done nothing to betray his trust in him; if he had done so, he would, again, have been a wrongdoer.

So, Joseph refused the lady's suggestion without hesitation. While narrating the rest of the story, the Qur'an says:

> Certainly, she burnt inwardly because of him; and he burnt inwardly because of her until he saw the evidence of his Lord: thus We did that we might turn away from him all evil and shameful deeds. For he was one of Our servants, made beforehand sincere and pure. (*Yusuf*, 12:24)

The sentence translated here as she burnt inwardly because of him; and he burnt inwardly because of her until he saw the evidence of his Lord, has unfortunately been misunderstood by some interpreters of the Qur'an to mean 'she desired, and was moved towards him; and he desired, and was moved towards her, but just at that point he saw the evidence of his Lord and stopped'. Some have, in interpreting the 'evidence of God' which Joseph saw, even gone so far as to invent a story that Jacob appeared with his hand on his lips and saved his son from committing a grave sin. This is, however, besides being a misunderstanding of the worst kind, a slander against a Prophet who was honoured and presented by God as 'a most excellent model of chastity', and by God's Messenger as the noblest of all. In order to clarify the point and remove such doubts, we should concentrate on the meaning of the verb, hamma, which we have translated literally 'to burn inwardly', and which has confused the interpreters mentioned earlier.

Hamma literally means 'to suffer, burn and be troubled inwardly and to be consumed with passion and longing'. There is a principle in the sciences of morphology and semantics that the first and most common meaning of a word is preferred unless an inconsistency or inconformity appears in the context. This principle, together with two other principles to be explained below, allow us no way other than to take *hamma* in its first meaning:

One: Joseph and his lady were worlds apart from each other with respect to their beliefs, ambitions, characters and ways of life. Therefore, each had suffering and anxiety of his or her own, and each was being consumed with completely different ambitions.

Two: The verse containing the verb hamma is a parenthetical one explaining the virtue of belief and sincerity, which bring God's special favour and protection. It is not there merely as a part of the story. It should also be noted that there are stops after each phrase to show that they do not link a chain of events, but express three different realities. In this case, the exact meaning of the verse will be as follows:

'Truly, the woman was burning inwardly because of her love for Joseph. As for Joseph, he got into a great trouble because of the woman; his chastity, good character and reputation might have been damaged. He had to find a way out to escape that situation. At this juncture, God's evidence — His protection, or something else — came to his aid and turned all evil away from him, because he was among those servants of God made by Him sincere and pure. He

was not *mukhlis*, one purified and who attained sincerity as a result of self-discipline and spiritual training, but he was *mukhlas*, one created by God sincere and pure.'

There is another point worth mentioning here that the verb *hamma* in the verse in question does not express 'starting an action'. Because, we read in the previous verse that the woman had already started the action: *she fastened the door and called Joseph to come to her*. But Joseph refused. So, to take the verb *hamma* in the meaning of 'to start towards' for both Joseph and the woman, will be contradictory to the previous verse, as well as to the next one which comes to describe the rest of the story: *So they both hurried to the door, and she tore his shirt from the back*. It is clear in this verse that the Prophet Joseph first hurried to the door to escape, and the woman ran after him to catch him, and tore his shirt from the back.

Some, however, have suggested that the woman desired Joseph, and Joseph might have had a desire for her if he had not seen the evidence of his Lord. Since he had been protected from the beginning against sins, he did not have any desire for the woman. In either case, the Prophet Joseph did not feel any inclination towards the woman and therefore did nothing to start towards her. In conclusion, like every other Prophet, he too, was infallible.



PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD, UPON HIM BE PEACE AND BLESSINGS

INTRODUCTION

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is superior to all other Prophets in every aspect of Prophethood. He had to be so since he was sent as a mercy to all the worlds, with a religion inclusive of all the essential tenets of the previously revealed religions and containing all the principles and dynamics required for the solutions to all kinds of problems which mankind are likely to face until the Last Day. The mission of all the previous Prophets was, however, confined to a certain people and a limited period. In the words of Busiri:

> He is the sun of virtues and the others are, in comparison to him, the stars that diffuse light for people at night.

When the sun rises, both the moon and stars are no longer visible. Likewise, when the 'Sun of Prophethood' — that is, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings — rose to illuminate all the universe, there was no longer a need for the light of stars.

Like his predecessors, inferior to him in rank, the last Prophet of God, Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was also infallible. We see both in the Qur'an and history books that, although his enemies spoke every slander against him, no one has ever dared to say anything to defame his honesty and infallibility.

They spoke every slander against Muhammad, but no one has ever been able to attack his truthfulness, trustworthiness, honesty and infallibility

They said he was 'mad' — he madly loved God and, again, madly desired and sought for the people to be guided, but he was not mad. They said he was a 'magician' charming people — he did charm them with his personality and the religion and the Book he brought from God Almighty, but he was not a magician. They said he was a 'soothsayer' — he made hundreds of predictions most of which have already come true, with the rest certain to come true, but he was not a soothsayer. In short, they spoke every slander against him, but no one has ever been able to attack his truthfulness, trustworthiness, honesty and infallibility.

Like the Qur'anic expressions which, superficially, seem to cast doubt on the infallibility of some of the Prophets we have so far concentrated on, there are also admonitions in the Qur'an regarding some actions of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Before passing on to clarify them, it should be noted once more that the Prophets, like great jurists, also exercised their reasoning to judge a matter or case about which there was not explicit or implicit ruling in Revelation, in the hope of solving it in the best way. Just as the wives of the Prophet are not, because of their position, the same as other Muslim women with respect to reward and Divine punishment (see, *al-Ahzab*, 36.30-32), the Prophets, upon them all be peace, were also not treated by God the same as other believers. So, when they

chose, for example, to drink the water of *zamzam* instead of *kawthar*, they were admonished. Because of this, such admonitions, the examples of which related to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, will be discussed below, should never be regarded as the result of sins. Further, rather than being admonitions, they should, in most cases, be taken as Divine compliments. We should therefore reiterate once more that the Prophets were free from committing sins.



God's Messenger's treatment of the prisoners of war taken in the battle of Badr

A handful of believers were subjected to the most brutal of tortures in Makka. They bore all of them patiently and never thought of retaliation, as the Qur'an ordered God's Messenger to call unbelievers to the way of God with wisdom and fair preaching and advised him to repel the evil with what was better, and overlook their faults and evils with magnanimous forgiveness. When the Muslims emigrated to Madina, having left most of their belongings in Makka in order to be able to live according to their beliefs, the harassment of the Makkan polytheists did not stop. Indeed, they also became the target of Jewish conspiracy in Madina. Also, since the Helpers, the native believers of Madina, had to share, although willingly, everything they had with their emigrant brothers, all the Muslims suffered deprivations. In such straitened circumstances, God Almighty permitted them to resist the enemy onslaught because they were wronged. This was just before the Battle of Badr.

The Battle of Badr was the first confrontation of the Muslims with the enemy forces. Although outnumbered, the believers won a great victory. Until then, if, indeed, we do not accept the opinions of some interpreters of the Qur'an that surah Muhammad, which contains regulations as to how to treat prisoners of war, was revealed before surah al-Anfal, no Divine commandment had been revealed as to how the captives should be treated. They did not even know whether they would kill the enemy on the battlefield or take them as prisoners. Sa'd ibn Muadh, for example, was not pleased when he saw his brothers (in-religion) taking enemy soldiers as prisoners of war; he was in favour of killing them in the first confrontation.

The battle ended and the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, chose, as he always did where there was no specific Divine commandment, to consult with his Companions about how they should treat the prisoners of war. Abu Bakr said:

> O God's Messenger! They are your people. Even though they did you and the believers great wrong, you will win their hearts and cause their guidance if you forgive them and please them.
>
> However, 'Umar gave this opinion:
>
> O God's Messenger! The prisoners of war are the leading figures of Makka. If we kill them, unbelief will no longer be able to recover to encounter us. So, hand over to each of the Muslims his kin among them. Hand over to 'Ali his brother 'Aqil to kill. Let Abu Bakr kill his son, 'Abd al-Rahman, and let me kill my relative so and so.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, turned to Abu Bakr and said:

> *You are, O Abu Bakr, like the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, who said: 'He who follows me is of me, and he who disobeys me – but You are indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Compassionate' (Ibrahim, 14.36). You are also like Jesus, who said: 'If You punish them, they are Your servants. If You forgive them, You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise' (al-Ma'ida, 5.118)*.

Then he turned to 'Umar and said:

> *O 'Umar! You are like Noah, who said: 'O my Lord! Leave not even a single unbeliever on earth!' (Nuh,*

> *71.26). You are also like Moses, who said: 'Our Lord, destroy their (Pharaoh's and his chiefs') riches and harden their hearts so that they will not believe until they see the painful chastisement' (Yunus, 10. 88)*.

Then, he acted according to the view of Abu Bakr.

Every Prophet was sent to guide people to the way of God, and the mission of each was undoubtedly based on mercy. However, mercy sometimes requires that, as in the case of Noah and Moses, upon them both be peace, an arm should be amputated for the health of the body, or even that the body should undergo a major operation. Islam, being the 'middle way' of absolute balance — balance between materialism and spiritualism, between rationalism and mysticism, between worldliness and excessive asceticism, between this world and the next — and inclusive of the ways of all the previous Prophets, makes a choice according to the situation. Prior to the Battle of Badr, the Muslims were weak, and unbelief was, in material terms, strong, formidable and organized. For this reason, conditions may have required that *the Prophet should not have had prisoners of war until he became completely triumphant in the land* (*al-Anfal*, 8.67). For they were fighting for the cause of God, not some worldly purposes, like collecting ransom. However, God Almighty had already decreed before that ransom and spoils of war would be lawful for Muslims. The pure hearts of the Prophet, upon him be peace, and Abu Bakr must have felt before that God would make spoils of war and taking ransom lawful for the Muslims and, before waiting for the Revelation, chose to release the prisoners of war in return for some ransom. However, had it not been for that decree, a severe penalty would have reached them for the ransom that they took. If, then, God made it lawful, they could enjoy what they took in war, lawful and good (*al-Anfal*, 8:67-69).

The same is mentioned more explicitly in another verse:

> *When you confront the unbelievers (in battle), smite their necks, and when you have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly on them. Thereafter (is the time for) either generosity (i.e. the release of prisoners without ransom) or ransom (recommended). (Muhammad, 47.4)*



The Prophet's granting exemption to hypocrites from the expedition of Tabuk

The expedition of Tabuk took place in the ninth year of Hijra. It was in summertime, when the heat is intense in Arabia, and against the Empire of Byzantium, which was one of the two superpowers of the time. Because of this, against his usual practice, God's Messenger announced where and against whom the expedition would be. Some people, therefore, came to God's Messenger and requested, for some reasons, exemption from the expedition. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, granted exemption to those whose excuses he regarded as justifiable, without, naturally, investigating whether they were telling the truth or not. This was what, of course, he had to do, because a Muslim must judge according to the outward signs and the affirmation of faith; he cannot pry into whether the person is being truthful or not. For this reason, hypocrites, who are outwardly Muslims but inwardly unbelievers, are treated as Muslims in a Muslim society; there were several of them in Madina in the time of the Prophet himself.

Besides, God Almighty is the One who veils the shortcomings of people. Accordingly, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never reproached people directly for their shortcomings. When he discerned a defect in some individual, or a fault common in the society, he used to climb the pulpit and warn the people generally against the shortcoming or fault he saw, without disclosing those in whom he saw it.

Among those who applied to God's Messenger for exemption from the expedition of Tabuk, were many hypocrites who offered false excuses. Despite this, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, accepted them. Concerning that, the following verse was revealed:

> *God forgive you! Why did you grant them exemption until those who told the truth were manifest to you, and you knew the liars? (al-Tawba, 9.43)*

Although some scholars have held that God Almighty reproached His Messenger for granting exemption to the hypocrites, the truth is the reverse.

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and many others, among whom are linguists, have correctly pointed out that the expression, *God forgive you*! is an exclamation, as one might say in English, 'God bless you!' So, the true meaning of the expression is 'God give you grace!' As explained earlier, it is not necessary for a sin to exist before forgiveness is granted and, as, for example, in the verses, 4.99, 5.3 and 4.43, forgiveness may be juxtaposed to 'grace' as they have closely allied meanings.

In addition to the explanations above, God's Messenger was motivated by kindness as well as policy — kindness because in the urgency of the moment, he did not wish anyone who had a real excuse to be refused exemption; and policy, because, if anyone did not come willingly or whole-heartedly, he would be a burden to the army and cause disorder in the army, as explicitly stated in the following verse:

> *If they had gone forth with you they would have added nothing but mischief to you and they would have hurried through your ranks, seeking to cause sedition among you. (al-Tawba, 9.47)*

God's Messenger recognized the hypocrites, as we read in another verse: *Surely you will know them by the tone of their speech*! (*Muhammad*, 47.30). In addition, God did not will that they should set out for war:

> *If they had intended to go forth they would certainly have made some preparation therefor; but God was averse to their being sent forth; so He made them lag behind, and they were told, 'Sit you among those who sit (inactive).' (al-Tawba, 9.46)*

That being so, the meaning of the verse in question is this:

'God give you grace! If you had not given them leave on their first application, the liars would have been clearly distinguished from the truthful.' In other words, it is not a reprimand to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings; rather it expresses a Divine compliment and affection for him.



Sura *al-'Abasa* or He Frowned

Prophethood is not an ordinary job which everyone desirous of it can do, and people are not identical to one another. Man has two aspects, one heavenly, the other earthly. He was shaped from 'dust', created from a contemptible drop of 'water', but distinguished with the 'breath of God'. So, human beings range from 'the lowest of the low' to 'the highest of the high'. All the Prophets were of the rank of the highest of the high. God chose them, created them pure, and endowed them with all laudable virtues, and intellectual and spiritual faculties of the highest degree. In order to catch a glimpse, only a glimpse, of the greatness of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, we should consider how, by God's Will and Power, he made, in so short a time as twenty-three years, out of coal-like people — savage, ignorant, pitiless, dishonest and obstinate — diamond-like founders of the most magnificent civilization in human history. In addition, according to the rule, 'One who causes something is like its doer', the reward of each deed any believer does, from the time of the Prophet to the Last Day, is added to the rewards of the Prophet, causing him to grow in spirit incessantly. Despite this fact, some classical books — some Qur'anic commentaries and the like — unfortunately contain some assertions based on borrowings or unreliable anecdotes incompatible with the truth of Prophethood. What is more tragic and heart-rending than this is that in the Muslim world itself, some so-called researchers, under the influence of either orientalists or worldly temptations, have been quite tactless, even insolent, in dealing with Prophethood in general, and God's Messenger in particular, and his Sunna. Deceived into mistaking 'the reflection of the sun for the sun itself', they regard themselves as free to criticize the Prophet and his Sunna. One of the pretexts they use for their misconduct is the initial verses of surah *al-'Abasa*:

> *He frowned and turned away because there came to him the blind man. But how can you know: perhaps he might purify himself? Or be forewarned, and warning might profit him? As to him who regards himself as self-sufficient, to him you eagerly attend, though it is not your concern if he does not purify himself. But as for him who eagerly hastens to you, and is in fear [of God], you are heedless of him. (al-'Abasa, 80.1-10)*

According to what some interpreters of the Qur'an have written, God's Messenger was once deeply and earnestly engaged in conveying the Message to pagan Quraysh leaders, when he was interrupted by a poor blind man, 'Abd Allah ibn Umm Maktum, one who was also poor, so that no one took any notice of him. He desired to profit from the teaching of God's Messenger. The holy Prophet disliked the interruption and showed impatience. Because of this, these verses were revealed to reproach the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

This story is, however, highly questionable due to the following:

1. The narration of the event and the figures who took part in it are not the same in all of the reliable books of Tradition as in some commentaries on the Qur'an. In some versions of the narration, besides Ibn Umm Maktum, seven other people are mentioned.

2. There are several verses in the Qur'an which explain how the previous Prophets behaved towards poor people, so it is inconceivable for a Prophet who always advised his followers to be in the company of the poor, that he could frown at, and turn away from, a poor, blind man, especially when he came to listen to him.

3. God's Messenger always rejected the calls of the leaders of Quraysh to drive away the poor Muslims from him if he desires them to believe in him.

4. The Qur'an attaches great importance to the way a believer behaves in the presence of God's Messenger. For example, it orders them 'not to depart without asking for his leave when they are with him on a matter'; prohibits them from entering the Prophet's house without permission; warns Muslims that their deeds and labour would come to nothing if they raise their voices above the voice of the Prophet and threatens those who ill-treat him with eternal punishment in Hell. That being the truth, it should have been Ibn Umm Maktum, not God's Messenger, who was reprimanded for interrupting God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

5. Ibn Umm Maktum, may God be pleased with him, was the son of Khadijah's uncle, and one of those who accepted Islam in its early days. He had a remarkable position in Islam. God's Messenger deputed to him the government of Madina twice while he was on military campaign. So, he cannot have been, despite his blindness, so reckless as to interrupt God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, while inviting the leaders of the Quraysh to the truth. He was blind, but he was not deaf.

6. The reprimand contained in the relevant verses is too severe to be for the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. The verbs 'to frown' and 'to turn away from', are never used in the Qur'an for a Prophet; in fact, they are not even used for ordinary believers. They are used in the verse in question in third singular form and in the absence of the Prophet, which means disrespect and debasement. Also, the expressions following are of the type used for the leaders of unbelievers. Therefore, it is inconceivable that the target of this reprimand was the Prophet.

7. The books of Qur'anic interpretation which mention this incident add to it that whenever God's Messenger saw Ibn Umm Maktum after that event would say to him: 'Greetings to you, O one because of whom my Lord admonished me!' This addition is also not to be found in any of the reliable books of Tradition.

8. God's Messenger was very kind-hearted and tried his hardest for the guidance of the people. And, in the words of the Qur'an, *It grieves him that the believers should perish, and he is ardently anxious over them, and most kind and merciful to them* (*al-Tawba*, 9.128).

After all these explanations, we choose to refer the truth of the matter to God, who is the All-Knowing.

The offer made by the tribe of Thaqif

In order to accept Islam, the people of Thaqif wanted God's Messenger to give them some concessions including exemption from some religious duties, as if the Messenger were authorized to do so. It is inconceivable not only for God's Messenger but even for an ordinary Muslim to think of allowing such concessions to anybody, even if he be the president of the most powerful state of the world. The verses revealed concerning this incident say:

> *They sought to entice you from what we reveal unto you, to substitute against us something different. Then, they would certainly have made you a trusted friend! Indeed, had We not given you strength and firmness, you might nearly have inclined to them a little. Then, We should have made you taste double (punishment) in this life, and double in death; and moreover you would have found none for you to help you against Us. (al-Isra', 17.73–5)*

It should, first of all, be noted that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is the direct addressee and receiver of the Divine Revelation. For this reason, God Almighty directly addresses him in the Commandments — orders and prohibitions — where collective, as well as individual, responsibilities are stressed. This does not mean that God's Messenger sometimes — God forbid! — neglected their performance. Being the embodiment, representative and preacher of Islam, as well as the best example, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, personified, practised them most strictly and experienced the 'whole history of Islam' in miniature measure. In other words, God used him and his time and his Companions as a pattern according to which all future expansion of Islam would be shaped. He functioned as a seed from which all future Islamic civilizations, Islamic movements and sciences, the universal tree of Islam, would grow. For this reason, such verses as the one above and the like should never be taken to suggest that God's Messenger was reproached for something he did that was wrong. That blessed person, who is the Beloved of God, for whose sake God created all the worlds, is absolutely free from every kind of defect, fault and shortcoming.

As explained in the previous sections, God's Messenger was extremely eager for the guidance of all people. In order to be able to have some understanding of his love and affection for, not only humanity, but for all existence, it will be enough to reflect on what a contemporary Muslim saint said concerning his connection with existence: 'Each leaf that falls off its branch in autumn gives me as much pain as my arm being amputated.' And, another says concerning his eagerness for the guidance and well-being of his nation: 'I have known nothing of worldly pleasures in my life of over eighty years. All my life has passed on battlefields, and at various other places of suffering. There has been no torment which I have not tasted and no oppression which I have not suffered. I care for neither Paradise nor fear Hell. If I witness that the faith of my nation – that is, all the Muslim peoples – has been secured, I will have no objection to being burnt in the flames of Hell, for my heart will change into a rose garden while my body is being burnt.' God said to His Messenger, consoling him in the face of persistent unbelief:

> *You will nearly grieve yourself to death, following after them, if they believe not in this Message. (al-Kahf, 18.6)*

Having seen God's Messenger's eagerness to guide people, the leaders of the Thaqif tribe made him the stupid offer mentioned earlier, adding that, if others objected, he might excuse it by lying that his Lord had ordered him to do so. From a purely human point of view, it may seem a good policy to make a small 'concession' in order to fulfil a great mission, but the Messenger was not the author of Islam. His duty was simply to communicate it. The religion is God's.



The Prophet's marriage to Zaynab

During the pre-Islamic period of *jahiliyya*, as is the case now, cultural, economic and spiritual slavery was widespread. Islam came to destroy the institution of slavery and sought to solve this social, as well as psychological, problem in

stages. Since slavery has a deep psychological aspect, its abolition in one go may have had far-reaching effects worse than slavery itself. For example, when Lincoln abolished 'legal' slavery in the United States, most of the slaves had to return to their owners because they had already lost initiative and the ability to make a free choice in managing their affairs as free people. So, Islam established, as its first step, strict principles in treatment of slaves, as seen in the following hadiths:

> Whoever kills his slave, he shall be killed. Whoever imprisons his slave and starves him, he will be imprisoned and starved himself, and whoever castrates his slave will himself be castrated.
>
> You should know that no Arab is superior to a non-Arab and no non-Arab is superior to any Arab, no white is superior to a black and no black is superior to a white. Superiority is only by righteousness and fear of God.

As its second step, Islam enabled slaves to realize their human consciousness and identity. It educated them in Islamic values, and implanted in them love of freedom. When, at last, the slaves were emancipated, they found themselves fully equipped with the potential to be useful members of the community as farmers, artisans, teachers, scholars, and commanders, governors and ministers and even prime ministers.

There was another practice in the pre-Islamic era, as still exists in the civil laws of many countries, which is adoption as a way of having children. Adopted children enjoyed the same legal status as natural children. It followed that a man could not legally marry, for example, the widow or former wife an adopted son. This was to be abolished because neither adoption nor any other way of declaring someone a son can create a relationship comparable to the relationship of children and natural parents.

As was the case with slavery, this practice was to be abolished. The Messenger himself was to bear a heavy burden as the one who would personally go against the accepted norms and stamp out a well-established custom.

Zayd was a black man who had been kidnapped from his family in his childhood by slave-traders and taken to the bazaar of Makka. Khadija, the first wife of God's Messenger, had bought him, and after her marriage to the Prophet, gave him as a present. God's Messenger emancipated him and called him 'my son'. Meanwhile, Zayd's parents had found out where he was and come to Makka to fetch him, but Zayd had preferred to stay with God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

In order to show the equality between black and white people and demonstrate that superiority only lies in righteousness and God-fearing, not in decent and worldly positions, God's Messenger married Zayd to Zaynab, the daughter of Jahsh. Zaynab was from the Hashimite tribe. She was a very devoted and intellectual Muslim woman and noble in character. God's Messenger knew her very well from her childhood. Although her family had wanted her to marry God's Messenger, they had given consent to her marriage with Zayd because God's Messenger desired it to be so.

Zayd, however, admitted himself to be spiritually inferior to his wife. He realized through his insight that Zaynab was a woman whose sublimity of character made her fit to be the wife of a far greater man than himself. He appealed to God's Messenger many times to allow him to divorce her, but each time, as the Qur'an explicitly states, God's Messenger warned him, saying: Retain your wife (in wedlock). Nevertheless, Zayd concluded that he was not his wife's equal and eventually divorced her. In the end, God's Messenger was ordered by God to marry her himself against the established traditions of the time. This marriage had been ordained in heaven and, therefore, God's Messenger had to concede to it:

> *When Zayd had dissolved (his marriage) with her, We gave her in marriage to you, so that there may be no difficulty and sin for believers in marriage with the wives of their adopted sons if they divorce them. And God's command must be fulfilled. (al-Ahzab, 33:37)*

Although, in essence, this marriage was very difficult for God's Messenger to enter into, God had willed that through

this marriage a false custom would be abolished and a new law and custom established through the ideal example of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Despite this, the enemies of Islam and hypocrites slandered God's Messenger and unfortunately some of these slanderous ideas have found their way into some Qur'anic commentaries. It should again be emphasized that any perverse allegation or slander has never had and will never have the least effect on his pure personality and world-admired chastity. As is unanimously agreed, he happily restricted himself to living with Khadija, a widow fifteen years older than himself, with nothing to suggest any misconduct during the twenty-five most youthful years when people burn with lust and carnal desires. This clearly shows that his marriages after the age of fifty, when desire has subsided, were not to satisfy his passions, but to fulfil some very important purposes.

In sum, like every other Prophet, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is absolutely free from any blemish, and no accusation can defame his infallibility.



PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE PROPHETS WERE FREE FROM ALL BODILY AND MENTAL DEFECTS

INTRODUCTION

One of the attributes of Prophethood, unanimously agreed upon by Muslim theologians, is that the Prophets were free from all kinds of bodily and mental defects. As they were extraordinarily attractive in personality and conduct, they were also graceful and charming in outward appearance. They had nothing in their bodies, from head to foot, that could disturb people. They were perfect in bodily structure, handsome and well-built.

Anas says that God’s Messenger was the most handsome of people. In describing his beauty, Jabir ibn Samura remarks:

> It was a full moon when we were sitting in the mosque. God’s Messenger came in. I looked first at the shining moon, and then at the face of God’s Messenger. I swear by God that the face of God’s Messenger was brighter than the moon.

Prophets must be free from all bodily defects as they should not repel by their appearance. In explaining the Divine wisdom of God’s Messenger living to sixty-three years, Said Nursi writes:

> Believers are religiously obliged to love and respect God’s Messenger to the utmost degree, and follow every command of his, without feeling any dislike for any aspect of him. For this reason, God did not allow him to live to the troublesome and often humiliating period of old age, and sent him to the ‘highest abode’ when he was sixty-three. This was the average life-span of the members of his community, thus making him the example in this respect also.



The afflictions of the Prophet Job, upon him be peace

Despite this phenomenon being common to all the Prophets, some false stories about Job and Moses, either borrowed from Israelite sources or misunderstandings of some Qur’anic verses, have found their way into some commentaries on the Qur’an.

In a hadith, God’s Messenger says: *The Prophets undergo the most severe of trials; the greatest of misfortunes strike them. Then come other believers; the firmer one is in belief, the bigger his misfortune is*. The Prophet Job is praised in the Qur’an as a steadfast, excellent servant of God, one ever-turning to his Lord (*Sa’d*, 38:44). As can be deduced from the Qur’anic verses, and mentioned in the Bible, he was afflicted with a kind of skin disease, with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head (*Job*, 2.7). Influenced by Israelite stories, some commentators of the Qur’an have, unfortunately, made additions that worms were produced on his sores or abscesses and, because of the bad smell emitting from those abscesses, people left him.

These additions are completely groundless. If people left the Prophet Job, this might have been due to his later poverty. For he was, in the beginning, a rich, thankful servant of God, but later lost all his wealth and children. As a Prophet, he can neither have had a repelling or disgusting appearance, with, at least, his face exempt from sores, nor have emitted bad smell. Contrary to what is written in the Bible that he cursed the day of his birth (*Job*, 3.1), and God

openly (*Job*, 7.20,21), and justified himself rather than God (*Job*, 32.2), Job bore his afflictions for years without any objection to God. He prayed: *Affliction has visited me, and You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful* (the Qur'an, *al-Anbiya'*, 21:83). God answered his prayer and removed the affliction that was upon him, and He gave him his household (that he had lost) and the like thereof along with them (*al-Anbiya'*, 21:84).



The knot on Moses's tongue

As for Moses, on receiving the order to go to Pharaoh, he supplicated:

> *My Lord, open my breast (relieve my mind and make me so persevering as to tolerate every impudence and bear every hardship), and ease for me my task. Make loose a knot upon my tongue so that they may understand my words. (Ta Ha, 20.25–8)*

Some commentators, influenced by Israelite sources, have misunderstood Moses' supplication, Make loose a knot from my tongue, and asserted that he suffered difficulty in speaking. According to the story they narrate, Moses once pulled Pharaoh's beard while being brought up in his palace. Angered at what the child did, Pharaoh wanted to have him killed, but his wife, in order to save the child, offered Pharaoh to test him whether he was fit to judge or decide in his favour. They put a piece of gold in one of the scales of a balance and embers in the other. The child took the embers and put them in his mouth. This made him a stammerer. So, by supplicating Make loose a knot from my tongue, Moses petitioned God to restore him the ability of articulation.

An invented story can be no basis for the interpretation of any Qur'anic verses. If Moses had had a speech impediment due to the burning of his tongue, he should have said, 'Make loose the knot', not 'a knot, from my tongue'. What Moses meant by Make loose a knot from my tongue, was that he was not as eloquent as his brother Aaron (the Qur'an, *al-Qasas*, 28:34; the Bible, *Exodus*, 4:10), and therefore desired to be more articulate in delivering God's Message in Pharaoh's palace.

In conclusion, all the Prophets were perfect both mentally and physically, with nothing to suggest any defect. However, some of them may, in some respects, have been superior to others: *And those Messengers, some We have preferred above others; some there are to whom God spoke [directly], and some He raised in rank* (*al-Baqara*, 2.253). However, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, enjoys, in general terms, superiority over all the others by virtue of being the last of them who was sent to all of humankind and jinn and whose mission was not restricted to a limited people and time, but was inclusive of all people and has validity until the end of time.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE PROPHET AND HIS WIVES

INTRODUCTION

The Prophet Muhammad, upon hi m be peace, is the most excellent example as father and husband. He was very kind and tolerant towards his wives. They could not live, they could not envisage life, without him. They could not live away from him.

He married Sawda, his second wife, while in Makka. However, after a while, he wanted to divorce her for certain reasons. When she heard this, she was extremely upset. She ran to him and begged, 'O Messenger of God, I wish no worldly thing of you. I will sacrifice the time allocated to me, if you do not wish to visit me. But, please, do not deprive me of being your wife. I wish to go to the Hereafter as your wife. I care for nothing else.'1 Her plea was accepted by the Messenger, who, however, never neglected visiting her, and Sawda remained one of the pure wives.

This was the position the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, held in their hearts. If he had divorced one of them, she would have waited at his doorstep until the Last Day.

Once, he noticed that Hafsa felt some discomfort as a result of their financial situation. 'If she wishes, I may set her free', he said, or something to that effect. This suggestion alarmed her a great deal. Mediators insistently told him what a good woman she was, requesting him not to divorce her. He did not, rather, he kept his faithful friend's daughter as his trusted wife.

Separation from the Messenger of God was a calamity. All his wives felt the same. The 'lord of the two worlds' had established his throne in their hearts. They were completely at one with him. They shared in his blessed, mild and natural life. If he had left them, they would have died of suffocation.

After his death, there was much yearning and a great deal of grief. Abu Bakr and 'Umar found the wives of the Messenger weeping whenever they visited them. Their weeping seemed to continue for almost a lifetime. Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, left a lasting impression on everyone. They could not forget him. At one point, he had nine wives and dealt equally with all of them without any serious problems. He was a kind and gentle head of family. He never behaved harshly or rudely. The perfect manner in which he carried out his role as husband demonstrates that he was the Messenger of God.

A few days before his death, he said, *A servant has been left free to choose this world or his Lord. He chose his Lord*. Abu Bakr, a man of great intelligence, began to cry, recognizing that the servant referred to was the very person speaking. Day after day, his illness got worse. His severe headache made him writhe with pain. Even during this difficult period, he continued to act kindly and gently towards his wives. He asked for permission to stay in one room as he had no strength to visit them one by one in each of their rooms. All his wives agreed and the Messenger, upon him be peace, spent his last days in 'A'isha's room.

He respected and honoured the rights of his wives even under the most severe conditions. This was the Messenger of God!

Each of his wives, because of his generosity and kindness, thought that she was his most beloved. The idea that any man could show equality and complete fairness in relationship with nine women seems impossible. For this reason, the Messenger of God asked God's pardon for any unintentional leanings. He would make this prayer:

> I may have unintentionally shown more love to one of them than the others and this would have been injustice. So, O Lord, I take refuge in Your grace for those things which are beyond my power.

What gentleness and sensitivity! I wonder if anyone else could show such kindness to his children or spouses. When people manage to partially cover up their lower inborn tendencies, it is as if they have done something very clever and shown a sign of their tremendous will-power. Sometimes it even happens that in bragging of their cleverness, they exhibit their defects unconsciously. The Messenger, despite showing no fault, asked God's forgiveness.

His gentleness must have penetrated the souls of his wives so deeply that his departure led to what they must have felt like an unceasing separation. They did not commit suicide as Islam forbids it. However, life became an endless sorrow and ceaseless tears.



The most gentle man of all times

The Messenger was kind and gentle to all women and advised everyone else to be kind to them. His kindness was described on the authority of Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, who related:

> 'Umar said: 'One day I went to the Prophet and saw him smiling. "May God make you smile forever, O Messenger of God!", I said, and asked why he was smiling.
>
> I smile at those women. They were chatting in front of me before you came. When they heard your voice, they all vanished, he answered still smiling. On hearing this answer, I raised my voice and told them, 'O enemies of your own selves, you are scared of me, but you are not scared of the Messenger of God, and you do not show respect to him.' "You are hard-hearted and strict", they replied.

'Umar was also gentle to women. However, the most handsome of men look ugly when compared to the beauty of Joseph. Likewise, 'Umar's gentleness and sensitivity would seem like violence and severity when compared to that of the Prophet.

The women had witnessed the gentleness, sensitivity and kindness of the Messenger. For this reason, they regarded 'Umar's behaviour as strict and severe. Yet 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, shouldered the burden of the Caliphate perfectly. He was to become one of the greatest examples after the Prophet. He showed justice in his behaviour and made a great effort to distinguish right from wrong. He had the qualities that led him to the rank of Caliph. Some of these qualities might seem rather severe to some of us; but, it was precisely because of these qualities that he was able to shoulder such demanding responsibilities.

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, discussed matters with his wives as friends. Certainly he did not need their advice, since he was directed by Revelation. However, he wanted to teach his nation. Contrary to the conventions of the time, women in Islam were to be given every consideration. He began teaching us through his own relationship with his wives.



The Prophet’s consultation with his wives

The conditions of the Treaty of Hudaybiya seemed, at first sight, very heavy to the Muslims. They felt they had no power left. They wanted to reject the treaty and go on to Makka and face the possible consequences. The Messenger ordered those with him to slaughter their sacrificial animals and leave their pilgrim attire. Some of the Companions were hesitant. They had hoped for a change in his decision. Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, repeated his order. It did not change their reluctance. They did not oppose him, but still hoped he might change his mind as they had set out with the intention of pilgrimage and did not want to stop half way.

Noticing the reluctance of some of his Companions, the ‘lord of the two worlds’ returned to his tent and asked the opinion of his wife, Umm Salama. This great lady explained her opinion, fully aware that the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, did not need her advice. In doing this, he taught us an important social lesson. We should learn that there is nothing wrong with exchanging ideas with women on such important matters.

She said: ‘O Messenger of God! Do not repeat your order. They may resist and thereby perish. Slaughter your sacrificial animal and change out of your pilgrim attire. They will obey you, willingly or not, when they recognize the certainty of your order.’ Immediately he took a knife in his hand, went out and began to slaughter his sheep. The Companions began to do the same. Everybody understood that there would be no change in his decision.

Counsel and consultation, like every good deed, were both practised by God’s Messenger first in the context of his own family and then in the wider community. We are very far from understanding his relationships with his wives; we are wandering around in the backyard unaware of the vast treasure inside.

Women are secondary beings in the minds of many, including those who claim they are defending women’s rights. For us, a woman is part of a whole, a part which renders the other half useful. We believe that when the two halves come together, the true unity of a human being appears. When this unity does not exist, humanity does not exist, nor can Prophethood or sainthood; nor, in fact, can Islam.



"The best of the believers is the kindest to his family"

Our master encouraged us through his enlightening words to behave kindly to women. He declared: *The most perfect of believers is the best of them in character and the best of you is the kindest to his family*.

It is clear that womanhood has been honoured in a meaningful sense only once in history; it was during the period of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.



The choice God’s Messenger gave to his wives

The wives of the Messenger were given the choice of remaining with him or leaving. This incident is referred to as al-takhyir and is also called al-ila. It was mentioned in the Qur’an as follows:

> O Prophet! Say to your consorts: ‘If it be that you desire the life of this world, and its glitter, then come! I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner. But if you seek God and His Messenger and the Home of the Hereafter, verily God has prepared for you, the well-doers amongst you, a great reward’. (*al-Ahzab*, 33:28-9)

A few of his wives had wished for a more prosperous life and said: ‘Couldn’t we live a little more luxuriously, like other Muslims do? Couldn’t we have at least a bowl of soup everyday? Could we not have some prettier garments?’ At first

sight, such wishes might be considered fair and just. However, they were members of the family that were to be an example for all Muslim families until the Last Day.

The Messenger, upon him be peace, reacted to this situation by not visiting them and going into retreat. The news spread and everybody rushed to the mosque and began to cry. The smallest grief felt by their beloved Messenger was enough to bring them all to tears. The Muslims were so close to the Messenger that the smallest incident would disturb them.

Abu Bakr and 'Umar, two of the Messenger's closest friends, saw the event in a different light, as their daughters were directly involved. They also rushed to the mosque.

They wanted to see him, but he would not leave his retreat. Eventually, on their third attempt, they gained entry to the house and began to manhandle their daughters. The Messenger saw what was happening, but his only comment was: *I cannot afford what they want*.

The Holy Qur'an declared:

> O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. (*al-Ahzab*, 33.32)

Others might save themselves by simply fulfilling the obligations placed upon them, but those who were at the very centre of this religion had to devote themselves fully so that no weakness would appear at the centre. There were some advantages in being the Prophet's wife, but these advantages brought responsibilities and potential risks. The Messenger was preparing them as 'examples'. He was especially worried that they might enjoy here in the world the reward for their good deeds and thereby be included in the verse:

> *You have exhausted your share of the good things in your life of the world and sought comfort in them. (al-Ahqaf, 46.20)*

The life in the Prophet's house was uncomfortable. For this reason, they explicitly or implicitly, made some modest demands. As their status was different from other women, they were not expected to enjoy themselves in a worldly sense.

There are some godly persons who laugh only a few times in a whole lifetime and who do not fill their stomachs even once. An example is Fudayl ibn 'Iyad, who never laughed. He smiled only once, and on that occasion, when people asked the reason in surprise, he said: 'Today, they informed me of the demise of my son, 'Ali. I was happy to hear God had loved him, and so I smiled.' If this was the state of such men, then, the Messenger's wives, who were even more God-fearing and regarded as the mothers of all Muslims, would certainly be of a higher degree.

It is not easy to merit being together with the Messenger in this world and the Hereafter. Thus, these special women were put to a great test. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, gave them the choice of his poor home or the luxury of the world. If they were to choose the world, the Messenger would give them whatever they wanted, but then set them free. If they were to choose God and His Messenger, they had to be content with what they had of this world. This was a peculiarity of his family. Since this family was unique, the members of it had to be unique, too. The head of the family was chosen, as were the wives and children.

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, called 'A'-isha first and said: 'I want to discuss a matter with you. You'd better talk to your parents before making a decision.' Then he recited the verses mentioned above. Her decision was exactly as expected from a truthful daughter of a truthful father:

> O Messenger of God! Do I need to talk to my parents? By God, I choose God and His Messenger.

'A'isha herself tells us what happened next:

> The Messenger received the same answer from all his wives. No one expressed a different opinion. They all said what I had said.

They said the same thing because they were all at one with the Messenger. They could not differ. If the Messenger had told them to fast for a lifetime without break, they would have done that. They would have endured it with pleasure. However, they endured hardship until their death.

Some of the Prophet’s wives had previously enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle. One of these was Safiyya. She had lost her father and husband during the Battle of Khaybar, where she herself was taken as a prisoner of war. She must have been very angry with the Messenger, but when she saw him, her feelings changed completely. She endured the same destiny as the other wives. They endured it because love of the Messenger had penetrated their hearts.



The Prophet and Safiyya, his Jewish wife

Safiyya was of Jewish origin and on one occasion she was dismayed when her origin was mentioned to her sarcastically. She informed the Messenger, expressing her sadness. Our master comforted her saying:

> If they repeat it, give them this response: ‘*My father is the Prophet Aaron, my uncle is the Prophet Moses and my husband is, as you see, the Prophet Muhammad, the Chosen One. What do you have more than me to be proud of*?’

The Qur’an declares that the wives of the Prophet are mothers of the believers (*al-Ahzab*, 33.6). Although fourteen centuries have passed, we still feel delight in saying ‘my mother’ when referring to his wives, Khadija, ‘A’isha, Umm Salama, Hafsa and the others. We feel this because of him. Some feel this more than they do for their real mothers. Certainly, this feeling must have been deeper, warmer and stronger then.

In conclusion, we can see that the Messenger was the perfect head of family. Managing many women with ease, being a lover of their hearts, an instructor of their minds, an educator of their souls, he never neglected the affairs of the nation nor compromised his duties. This is a clear proof of his Prophethood. If this were the only proof, it would be enough.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

GOD'S MESSENGER AND CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, excelled in every walk of life. People should not compare him to themselves or the so-called 'great personalities' of their age. Researchers should look at him, the one to whom angels are grateful, always remembering that he excelled in every way. If they want to look for Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, they must search for him in his own dimensions. It is not possible to reach him using the imaginations of people like us, who do not even know how to imagine properly, for God bestowed upon him, as His special favour, superiority in every field.

The Prophet Muhammad is truly the pride of humanity. He lived and died with honour. Humanity has never witnessed and never will witness a person like him. Even his contemporaries could not see him in his full reality. Most of them could not recognize him. However, the number of his nation who know and respect him has ever since increased continually.



The Messenger was unique in every way

He was an extraordinary head of family, a perfect father, and a unique grandfather. He was unique in every way.

He treated his children and grandchildren with extraordinary compassion and never neglected to direct their faces to the Hereafter and towards good deeds. He smiled at them, caressed and loved them, but he did not allow them to neglect the matters related to their afterlife. In worldly matters, he was extremely open, yet he was very serious and dignified in maintaining their relationship with God. He showed how to lead a humane life, and never allowed them to be neglectful of their religious duties. He was very careful about this, so as to keep them from becoming spoilt, and to prepare them for the life of the Hereafter. He was perfectly balanced. This was another dimension of his divinely inspired intellect.



No one has ever been as compassionate to his family as Muhammad

In a hadith narrated by Muslim, Anas bin Malik, honoured as the servant of the Messenger, one who performed this

service with perfect loyalty for ten years without break, says:

> I have never seen a man who was more compassionate to his family members than Muhammad.

He was so compassionate, so sincere and so open that no one can be compared to him.

If this admission were made just by us, it could have been dismissed as unimportant. However, millions of people, so benign and compassionate that they would not even offend an ant, declare and admit that he was unique in that he embraced the whole being with compassion.

He was a human like each of us, but God inspired in him intimate affection for every living being so that he would be able to establish a connection with all of them. Because of this, he was full of extraordinary affection toward his family members and others.

All of his sons had died. His last son, Ibrahim, born of Mary, the Copt, did not live long either. The Messenger often visited his son while alive, although he was very busy, who was looked after by a nurse, and he embraced, kissed, caressed him, and then returned home. When Ibrahim passed away, the Prophet took him on his lap again, embraced him and described his sorrow while on the brink of tears. Some were surprised. He gave them this answer: *Eyes may water and hearts may be broken but we do not say anything except what God will be pleased with*. He pointed to his tongue and said: *God will ask us about this*. He was the most compassionate, most merciful of all people.

He took his grandsons Hasan and Husayn on his back and carried them around with him. Is it possible for a man of such status to do such a thing? He did it without hesitation. By doing this, he also heralded the honour that they would attain later. One day, when Hasan and Husayn were on his back, ‘Umar came into the Prophet’s house. When he saw them on such an honoured place, he said, ‘What a beautiful mount you have!’ The Messenger added immediately: *What beautiful riders they are*! They may not even have been aware of the way the Messenger had honoured them. This special compliment was because of their position as the future leaders and family heads of the household of the Prophet. From them were to come the greatest and most respected ones among saints. His compliment was not only for his grandsons but for all his offspring. For this reason, ‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani, a well-known member of the household of the Prophet, said: ‘The blessed feet of the Messenger are on my shoulders and mine are on the shoulders of all saints.’ This statement will probably stand for all saints to come.



The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was completely balanced in the way he brought up his children

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was completely balanced in the way he brought up his children. He loved his children and grandchildren very much and instilled love in them, but, he never let this be abused. None of them dared deliberately do anything wrong but, if they made a mistake unintentionally, the Messenger’s protection prevented them from going astray even the least. He did this by wrapping them in love and an aura of dignity. For example, once, Hasan or Husayn wanted to eat a date that had been given as alms. The Messenger rushed and took it from his hand immediately, and said: *The date given as alms is forbidden to us*. In bringing them up to be sensitive to the forbidden acts, even in their childhood, he laid down for us an important principle of education.

Whenever he returned to Madina he would carry children on his mount. On such occasions the Messenger embraced not only his grandchildren but also those in his house and those nearby. Through his compassion he conquered their hearts.

He loved all children. He loved Umama, his granddaughter, just as he loved Hasan and Husayn. He often went out with her on his shoulders. He even placed her on his back while praying. When he went to prostrate, he put her down and when he had finished he took her on his back again.

He showed this degree of love to Umama so as to teach how to treat girls to a society that used to bury their daughters alive only a decade previously. Among those people, the Messenger's care for his granddaughter was novel and had never been seen before.



No discrimination between sons and daughters

There is no discrimination between son and daughter in Islam. The Messenger himself showed this. How can there be? One of them is Muhammad, the other is Khadija; one is Adam, the other is Eve; one is 'Ali, the other is Fatima. For every great man there is a great woman.

Fatima, the daughter of the Messenger, is the mother of all members of the household of the Prophet. She is our mother, too. As soon as Fatima entered, the Messenger would stand, take her hands and make her sit where he had been sitting. He asked about her health and family, caressed her and paid her many compliments.

He loved her like his own self, and Fatima, knowing how fond he was of her, loved him more than her own self. Her great mission was to be the seed for the saints and godly people. She always watched her father and his method of calling to Islam. For this reason, she wept and groaned when the Messenger gave her the news of his impending death, and rejoiced when he told her that she would be the first to follow him. Her father loved her, and she loved her father. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was totally balanced even in his love for Fatima. He trained her for the heights to which the human soul should rise.

The Messenger brought up Fatima, as well as the other members of his family and also his Companions, in a way to prepare them for the Hereafter. Human beings were created for eternity. They cannot be satisfied except through eternity and the Eternal Being. Therefore, human beings want nothing but Him, and they long for Him either consciously or unconsciously. The essence of all religions and the message of every Prophet was about the Next World. For this reason, the Messenger always sought to prepare his followers for the eternal peace and permanent bliss while himself giving to them a sample of that peace and bliss which they would taste in his presence. Fatima once came to the Messenger with a necklace (a bracelet, according to another version). He said to her: *Do you want people — inhabitants of the earth and the inhabitants of heavens — to say that the daughter of the Prophet is holding (or wearing) a chain from Hell*?

He loved them and directed them towards the Hereafter, to the otherworldly and eternal beauties, and to God. His words were enough for Fatima. For those words were coming from a man whose throne was established in her heart and who had conquered all her faculties. For this reason, Fatima said:

> I immediately sold the necklace, bought a slave and emancipated him, and then went to the Messenger. When I told him what I had done, he rejoiced. He opened his hands and thanked God: All thanks to God who protected (my daughter) Fatima from Hell.

Certainly, Fatima did not commit a sin by wearing the necklace, however, the Messenger wanted to keep her in the circle of the *muqarrabin*, those who were made near to God. Our master's warning was due to taqwa, fear of God, and *qurb*, nearness to Him. This was, in a sense, a neglect of worldly things, and an example of the sensitivity befitting the mother of the household of the Prophet, which represents the Muslim nation until the Last Day. To be a mother of godly men like Hasan, Husayn and Zayn al-'Abidin was certainly no ordinary task. The Messenger was preparing her to be the mother of *Ahl al-Bayt* first, and then the mother of 'Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, Muhammad Baha' al-Din al-Naqshband, Ahmad Rifai', Ahmad Badawi, al-Shadhili and the like. As if he said to her: 'My daughter! You are to marry a man and go to a house from which many golden 'rings' will consequently come. Forget that golden chain on your neck and concentrate on becoming the mother for the 'golden chains' of saints who would appear in the spiritual orders of Naqshbandiya, Rifaiya, Shadhiliyyah and the like.' It was difficult to fulfil the role of mother of the great ones while wearing a golden necklace. For this reason, the Messenger was more severe with his own household than others in these kinds of matters. He reminded them of the straight path by turning their faces towards the other world,

closing all the windows opening on the 'world' and telling them, What you need is God.

They would lead their whole lives looking to the other world. For this reason, the Messenger purified, as a sign of his love, his most beloved ones from all worldly rubbish, not allowing worldly dust to 'soil their robes'. He turned their faces towards the exalted realms and prepared them for being together there.



"A man is with whom he loves"

'A man is with whom he loves'. If you love the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, you will be on his path, and those who are on his path will be together with him in the world beyond. To prepare his family and Companions for this gathering, the Messenger loved and embraced them, and used this love efficiently.



What was better for Fatima than having a maid?

Bukhari and Muslim gave another example of his education system. It was narrated by 'Ali, who said:

> We had no servant in our house. Fatima did all the housework by herself. We lived in a house with just a small room. There, Fatima lit a fire and tried to cook. She often singed her clothes while trying to increase the fire by blowing. Moreover, she baked our bread and carried water. Her hands became covered in callouses from turning the millstone and her back also became so because of carrying water. Meanwhile some prisoners of war were brought to Madina. The Messenger gave them to those who applied. I suggested to Fatima to ask for a servant from her father. And she did.

Fatima continues:

> I went to my father, but he was not at home. 'A'isha said that she would tell him when he came, and I returned home. As soon as we went to bed, the Messenger came in. We wanted to get up, but he did not let us and sat between us. I could feel the cold of his foot on my body. He asked what we wanted and I explained the situation. The Messenger, in an awesome manner, said:
>
> > O Fatima! Fear God, and be faultless in your duties to Him! (Fulfil all the obligatory deeds that God ordered and be loyal to your husband.) I should say to you another thing: When you want to go to bed, say *Subhana-llah* (All glory be to God) and *al-hamdu li-llah* (All praise be to God) and *Allahu akbar* (God is the greatest) thirty three times each. This is better for you than having a maid.

He meant: 'I am turning your faces to the other-worldly realms, and there are two ways for you to reach them and be together with me there: fulfilling your duties in perfect servitude to your Lord and fulfilling your duties to your husband. If a maid takes your responsibilities, this may make you deficient. You must have two wings in order to fly to the higher ranks. How can a man or woman become a perfect slave of God? How can a person become a perfect human being and fulfil all of his or her obligations? It is your duty to find the answers of these.

First of all, become a perfect slave of God. Then, become a perfect human being by performing your duties to 'Ali, a great man who represents all the saints from among his descendants, so that you may be with me in Heaven where all the perfect things and perfect human beings shall come together.'



‘Ali: The king of all saints

I cannot help but digress to mention a fact about ‘Ali. The Messenger gave him his daughter without any hesitation, because he deserved being the husband of a Prophet’s daughter and a son-in-law of a Prophet. He was the king of the saints, and was created in this nature. The Messenger, one day, said to him:

O ‘Ali! The offspring of every other Prophet came from himself, however mine will come from you.

‘Ali is the father of the offspring, grandchildren, of the Prophet, namely, the household of the Prophet. For this reason, to obey ‘Ali means to obey the Messenger, and to obey the Messenger means to obey God. Also, those who love ‘Ali should love the Prophet and follow his Sunna.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE EDUCATIONAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE TIME OF HAPPINESS

INTRODUCTION

In the house of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, there was a permanent awe. Every action was awesome. It was possible for those who caught a glance of him to feel the allure of Heaven and horror of Hell. His shivering while performing the prayer, swaying to and fro, trembling with the fear of Hell and ‘flying’ on wings of the desire of Heaven and fear of Hell were known and seen in his house. Yes, those who looked at him, remembered God. Imam al-Nasa’i narrates:

> While the Messenger was praying, a sound, like a boiling pot, was heard.

He always prayed with a burning and weeping heart. Our mother ‘A’isha often found him in the presence of his Lord, prostrating and trembling.

His behaviour had an inspiring effect on everyone around and they all benefited. The children and wives of every Messenger had the same awe and fear, as they preached, ordered and advised what they had experienced and gave examples through their actions. We can assess the impact of an individual through his behaviour in his house. If all the pedagogues with all their acquired knowledge about education joined together, they could not be as effective as a Prophet.



The Messenger represented and expressed what he wanted to teach through his actions, and then he translated his actions into words

The Messenger represented and expressed what he wanted to teach through his actions, and then he translated his actions into words. How to be full of awe before God, how to be humble, how to prostrate with deep feelings, how to bow, how to sit in prayer, how to cry out at night – the Messenger first did all of them himself and then taught the others. So, whatever he preached was immediately accepted both in his house and outside it, and his words penetrated the hearts of the believers. After all, he was a unique father and grandfather. This is an important fact which is, however, often overlooked and neglected; it is indeed one of the most important roles we all have to fulfil.

Many illustrious persons have appeared in his progeny that each one shone among his generation like a sun, or moon or a star. He also brought up a generation — the Companions — so perfectly that among them almost no one turned

to be a heretic. It can, additionally, be said that also among his progeny no heretic has ever emerged. This fact is a unique distinction of the Messenger. While there have appeared heretics and apostates among the household and descendants of many saintly people, none of Muhammad's descendants have betrayed the roots of their household. A few exceptions, if there are, do not negate the rule.

Here is another proof of Muhammad's Prophethood. This was more than just pedagogical genius. The following verse may shed light on this:

> It is He who has sent amongst the unlettered, a Messenger of their own, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest error. (*al-Jumu'a*, 62:2)

Some of the words in the verse are very interesting. He refers to God, who is mentioned, in the verse, in the third person, because people did not know Him. They were ignorant, primitive and savage people. There was no 'He' in their minds, so God, first, emphasizes the darkness of their nature and how away from God they were and shows that they cannot be addressed directly by Him.

Then God calls them unlettered. They were not all illiterate, but they had no knowledge about God and the Messenger. God, by His infinite Power, sent this trifling community the one with a greatest will-power, with the most sublime nature and the deepest spirituality and highest morality, and He instructed them in how to become geniuses who would go on to govern all of humanity.

The word amongst shows that the Messenger was one of them in the sense of being unlettered. Yet, the Messenger was not a man of the Age of Ignorance. It was necessary for him to be unlettered, as God would teach him what he needed to know. He would take him apart from them, educate him and make him a teacher for the unlettered peoples.

To recite to them His signs, to purify them points out that He instructs them in the meanings of the Book and the creation gradually, and explains to them how to become perfect human beings. He educates and guides them to spiritual perfection. He guides them to higher ranks by instructing them in the Book, the Qur'an, in the universe and in the way of leading a balanced, exemplary life.

Although they had been, before, in manifest error explains that God would purify and educate them even though they were astray. He did all of this through an unlettered Messenger.

God taught them the Book, that is the glorious Qur'an. Hundreds of thousands of brilliant scientists, scholars and saints have found their source in this Book. It will also educate the brilliant generations of the future and elevate them to 'the highest of the high'. All of the so-called original ideas will disappear one by one, like candles blown out, and there will be only one 'sun' left – the Qur'an – which will never set. Its flag will be the only one waving on the horizon, and every generation will rush to it, breaking the chains around their necks. The signs have already appeared. Despite the despotism, tyranny, cruelty and harsh reactions of the modern world, the Islamic spirit, with its freshness, allures hearts and minds all over the world.

After the Prophet, mankind saw his flag waving everywhere for succeeding centuries. Those who followed him flew to the highest 'realms' on the wings of sainthood, God-fearing, uprightness and knowledge and science. Those who have climbed the steps of good conduct and spirituality, and knowledge and science, have all seen in each step the 'footprints' of the Prophet Muhammad and saluted him with 'God bless you!'. They will do the same again in a near future.

The basic principles in the education system of the Messenger

The education of the Messenger is not just the purification of the evil-commanding selves. He came with a universal system of education and presented a message that would raise all the hearts, all the spirits, all the minds and all the souls to their ideals. The universal truths of the Qur'an also state this fact. Moreover, he came with the Message that would touch human senses, outer and inner, make its followers rise on the wings of love and compassion, and would take them to the places where imaginations wander. The Prophet opened and again will open the doors of economic, social, administrative, military, political and scientific institutions to his students whose minds and spirits he trained and developed to become perfect administrators, the best economists, the most successful politicians and unique military geniuses. The Messenger came with a universal call encompassing, in addition to the rules of good conduct and spirituality, the principles of economics, finance, administration, education and justice and international law. He came with a perfect Message, as confirmed by the Qur'an: *Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you, and I have been pleased with Islam for you as religion* (*al-Ma'ida*, 5.3).

That is to say, all the previous Prophets were sent each to a certain people and for a fixed time. But God chose the Prophet Muhammad and the Religion of Islam for all times and peoples, thus perfecting, through Islam, His universal favour upon His creation. He adorned Islam with the principles that everybody would be pleased with. Therefore, those who try to find fault in the Message and principles God's Messenger brought, should rather seek them in their own minds and souls. He was a man who completed, perfected and reformed.

He educated his people not only spiritually and morally but also intellectually, scientifically, socially and economically. He made an illiterate, savage people into an army of most blessed saints, illustrious educators, invincible commanders, most eminent statesmen and praiseworthy founders of the most magnificent civilization of human history.

The perfection of an educator depends on the greatness of his ideal and the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of his listeners. Even before Prophet Muhammad's demise, the blessed instructors and spiritual guides he dispatched were travelling in a vast area stretching from Egypt to Iran, from the Yemen to Caucasia to teach what they learned from their excellent master. In succeeding centuries, peoples of different traditions and conventions and different cultures — the Persians and Turanians, the Chinese and Indians, Romans and Abyssinians as well as all of the Arabs and some of the Europeans — rushed to his Message.

The greatness of an educator also depends on the continuation of his principles. Now, as anyone can see, people all over the world accept his Message and adopt his principles, and the religion he preached will embrace, by God's Will and Power, almost the whole of mankind in a near future.

Remember that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, appeared among a wild and primitive people. They used to drink alcohol, gamble and commit adultery without shame. Prostitution was legal and whorehouses were indicated by a special flag. Indecency was so extreme that man would be embarrassed to be called a man. They frequently fought with each other. It was impossible to unite them into a strong nation. Everything evil could be found in the land in which he appeared. Yet he eradicated all of those evils. Further, he encouraged in them such virtues that they became the leaders and teachers of the civilized world. He built a civilized nation from a savage people. Even today, we can not reach their ranks. This has been acknowledged even by some intellectuals of the West such as Isaac Taylor, Robert Briffault, John Davenport, M. Pickhtal, P. Bayle and Lamartine. Only as an example, Lamartine asks:



Lamartine asks: "Is there one greater than Muhammad?"

> Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial states and of one spiritual state, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: is there any man greater than he?



Some of the students brought up in the school of Muhammad

God creates living things from lifeless things. He grants life to soil and rock. The Prophet worked 'rock, soil, coal, copper' and transformed them into 'gold and diamond' — Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Khalid, 'Uqba ibn Nafi', Tariq ibn Ziyad, Abu Hanifa, Imam Shafi'i, Bayazid al-Bistami, Muhyi al-Din al-'Arabi, Biruni, Zahrawi and hundreds of thousands of others have all been brought up in his school. The Messenger never allowed human faculties to remain undeveloped. He developed them and replaced any weakness in them with marvellous competencies. As a great thinker recalled, 'Umar, before becoming a Muslim, had the potential to be a great man. After embracing Islam, he became a powerful, yet very gentle man who would not step on an ant, who would not kill even a grasshopper. Such was his compassion, sensitivity and understanding of justice and administration that he used to say: '*If a sheep falls into the river Tigris because of a destroyed bridge over it, God will interrogate Umar for this*.'

We cannot eradicate so small a habit as smoking from our society despite having all modern facilities and holding, almost every day, symposiums and conferences against it. Medical science says that it causes larynx, mouth, oesophagus and windpipe and lung cancer; however, this is not enough to make people give up this bad habit. On the other hand, the Messenger of God eradicated many bad habits ingrained in his people. He replaced them with most laudable virtues and habits. He did it in a way that even angels in the sky watched on enviously. Those who saw them used to say: 'Oh God! These are not angels, but more superior than angels'. Angels will say in awe, 'We wonder whether these are Prophets or angels', as they are passing over the Bridge over Hell with their lights spread everywhere. In fact, they are neither Prophets nor angels. They are the nation of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. They were educated by him.

'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, may God be pleased with him, was a shepherd looking after the flocks of 'Uqba ibn Abi Muayt. The Messenger of God took this man into his circle and made him the cornerstone of the Kufan School of Islamic Jurisprudence. Remember that Alqama al-Nahai, Hammad, Sufyan al-Thawri, and Abu Hanifa were all the students of this school. These men, each a specialist in their own field, received their knowledge indirectly from Ibn Mas'ud, may our souls be sacrificed to this shepherd! The Messenger made ordinary people into geniuses.

Through this education, a Barbarian slave, Tariq ibn Ziyad, conquered Spain with a handful of valiants and laid the foundations of one of the most splendid civilizations of world history. After the victory, Tariq went to the palace where the treasuries of the defeated Spanish king were kept. He said to himself: '*Tariq, be careful! Yesterday you were a slave with a chain around your neck. God emancipated you and today you are a victorious commander. However, you will change tomorrow into flesh rotting away under earth. Finally, a day will come when you will stand in the Presence of God*!' The world and its pomp were not able to allure Tariq. That great commander lived a very simple life. What kind of education was it which made a slave into a man of such dignity and honour?

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, considered human beings with all their mental and spiritual capacities. He did not leave any of those capacities undeveloped. He developed them, and transformed the most evil-natured nomads into the most virtuous people. His wisdom in assessing the potentials of people is another proof of his Prophethood.



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PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT I

THE REASONS BEHIND THE SEVERAL MARRIAGES OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Introduction

Some critics of Islam, either because they are not aware of the facts about the marriages of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, or because they are not honest and objective about those facts, have reviled the Prophet as a self-indulgent libertine. They have accused him of character failings which are hardly compatible with being of average virtue, let alone with being a Prophet and God's last Messenger and the best model for all mankind to follow. However, if the facts are simply recounted—and they are easily available from scores of biographies and well-authenticated accounts of his sayings and actions—it becomes clear that the Prophet lived the most strictly disciplined life, that his marriages were a part of that discipline, a part of the many, many burdens that he bore as God's Last Messenger.

> **The reasons behind the Prophet's several marriages are various, but even in the privateness of some of those reasons, they all had to do with his role as the leader of the new Muslim umma, guiding his people towards the norms and values of Islam.**

The reasons behind the Prophet's several marriages are various, but even in the privateness of some of those reasons, they all had to do with his role as the leader of the new Muslim ummah, guiding his people towards the norms and values of Islam. In the following pages we shall try to explain some of those reasons and, in so doing, demonstrate that the charges levelled against the Prophet on this count are as vile and indecent as they are utterly false.

> **It is remarkable that Muhammad always enjoyed a reputation for perfect chastity as well as integrity and trustworthiness.**

The Prophet, not at that time called to his future mission, first married at the age of twenty-five. Given the cultural environment in which he lived, not to mention the climate and other considerations such as his youth, it is remarkable that he should have enjoyed a reputation for perfect chastity as well as integrity and trustworthiness generally. As soon as he was called to the Prophethood he acquired enemies who did not hesitate to publicize false calumnies against him — but not once did any of them (and in their *jahiliyya* (ignorance) they were not scrupulous men) dare to invent against him what no one could have believed. It is important to realize that his life was founded upon chastity and self-discipline from the outset, and so remained.

> **After Khadija's death, his first wife, a widow fifteen years older than him, Muhammad lived a single life for four or five years. All his other marriages began after he reached the age of fifty-five, an age by which very little real interest and desire for marriage remains. The allegation that his marriages after this age were an expression of licentiousness or self-indulgence, is as groundless as it is foul.**

At the age of twenty-five, then, and in the prime of life, Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, married Khadija, a woman much his senior in years. This marriage was very high and exceptional in the eyes of the Prophet and God. For twenty-three years, his life with Khadija was a period of uninterrupted contentment in perfect fidelity. In the eighth year of Prophethood, however, Khadija passed away and the Prophet was once again single, as he had been until the age of twenty-five, though now with children. His enemies cannot deny, but are forced to admit that, during all these long years, they cannot find a single flaw in his moral character. During the lifetime of Khadija, the

Prophet took no other wife, although public opinion among his people would have allowed him to do so had he wished to. After Khadija's death, he lived a single life for four or five years. All his other marriages began after he reached the age of fifty-five, an age by which very little real interest and desire for marriage remains. The allegation that his marriages after this age were an expression of licentiousness or self-indulgence, is as groundless as it is foul.



Can the plurality of a Prophet's marriages be in accord with his role as a Prophet?

A question people often ask is: How can the plurality of his marriages be in accord with his role as the Prophet? There are three points to be made in answering this question, but first let us recognize that those who continually raise such questions are either atheists (who themselves have no religion) or are 'people of the Book' i.e. Christians or Jews. Both these classes of critics are equally ignorant of Islam and religion, or willfully confuse right with wrong in order to deceive others and spread doubt and mischief.

Those who neither believe in nor practise any religious way of life have no right to reproach those who do. They have relations and unions with many women without following any rule or law or ethic. However they may pretend otherwise, what they do is unrestrained self-indulgence with, in practice, little regard for the consequences of their life-style upon the happiness and well-being of even their own children, let alone of the young in general. In certain circles who advertise themselves as the most 'free', sexual relations which most societies condemn as incestuous are regarded as permissible; homosexuality is as 'normal' for them as any other kind of relationship; some even practise polyandry — that is, one woman having at the same time many 'husbands' — the agony of any children from such unions who may never be sure of who their father is, we leave to the reader's imagination. The only motive that people who live in this way can have for criticizing the Prophet's marriages is the foolish hope that they can drag Muslims down with them into the mess of moral confusion and viciousness in which they themselves are trapped.

Jews and Christians who attack the Prophet for the plurality of his marriages can only be motivated by their fear and jealous hatred of Islam. They plainly forget that the great patriarchs of the Hebrew race, named as Prophets in the Bible as well as the Qur'an, and revered by the followers of all three faiths as exemplars of moral excellence, all practised polygamy — and indeed on a far greater scale than the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace.

Here we can remember the acknowledgement of an Isaac Taylor who spoke at the Church Congress of England on how Islam changes the people who accept it:

> The virtues which Islam inculcates are temperance, cleanliness, chastity, justice, fortitude, courage, benevolence, hospitality, veracity and resignation... Islam preaches a practical brotherhood, the social equality of all Muslims. Slavery is not part of the creed of Islam. Polygamy is a more difficult question. Moses did not prohibit it. It was practised by David and it is not directly forbidden in the New Testament. Muhammad limited the unbounded license of polygamy. It is the exception rather than the rule...

Polygamy was not originated by the Muslims. Furthermore, in the case of the Prophet of Islam, as we shall see, polygamy (or, more strictly, polygyny) has, from the viewpoint of its function within the mission of Prophethood, far more significance than people generally realize.

In a sense, the plurality of wives was a necessity for the Prophet through whose practice (or Sunna) the statutes and norms of Muslim law were to be established. Religion may not be excluded from the private relations between spouses, from matters that can only be known by one's partner. Therefore, there must be guidance from women who can give clear instruction and advice without using an allusive language of hints and innuendoes which leaves the meaning obscure and incomprehensible. The chaste and virtuous women of the Prophet's household were the teachers responsible for conveying and communicating to the people the norms and rules that concern the conduct of Muslims in their private lives.



Some of the marriages of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, were contracted for specific reasons to do with his wives:

1. Since there were young, middle-aged and old women amongst them, the requirements and norms of Islamic law could be exemplified in relation to their different life stages and experiences. These provisions of the law were first learnt and applied within the Prophet's household and then passed on to other Muslims through the teaching of his wives.

2. Since each of his wives was from a different clan or tribe, the Prophet established bonds of kinship and affinity throughout the Ummah. This enabled a profound attachment to him to spread amongst the diverse peoples of the new Ummah, creating and securing equality and brotherhood amongst them in a most practical way and on the basis of religion.

3. Each of his wives, from their different tribes, both whilst the Prophet was living and after he passed away, proved of great benefit and service to the cause of Islam. They conveyed his message and interpreted it to their clans; the outer and inward experience, the qualities, the manners and faith of the man whose life, in all its details, public and intimate, was the embodiment of the Qur'an – Islam in practice. In this way, all the members of their clan, men and women, learnt about the Qur'an, *Hadith, tafsir* (interpretation and commentary on the Qur'an), and *fiqh* (understanding of the Islamic law), and so became fully aware of the essence and spirit of the Islamic religion.

4. Through his marriages, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, established ties of kinship throughout the Arabian peninsula. What this meant was that he was free to move and be accepted as a member in each family, each of whose members regarded him as one of their own. For that reason each felt that they could go to him in person to learn about the affairs of this life and of the life hereafter, directly from him. Equally, the tribes benefited collectively also from this proximity to the Prophet; they esteemed themselves to be fortunate and took pride in that relationship, such as the Umayyads through Umm Habiba, the Hashimites through Zaynab bint Jahsh, and the Banu Makhzum through Umm Salama.

What we have said so far is general and could, in some respects, be true of all the Prophets. However, now we will discuss the life sketches of *Ummahat al-Mu'minin* — the mothers of the believers — not in the order of the marriages but in a different perspective.

Khadija, may God be pleased with her, was the first among the Prophet's wives. At the time of her marriage, she was forty years old and Muhammad, upon him be peace, was twenty-five. She was the mother of all his children except a son, Ibrahim, who did not live long. As well as being a wife, Khadija was also a friend to her husband, the sharer of his inclinations and ideals to a remarkable degree. Their marriage was wonderfully blessed; they lived together in profound harmony for twenty-three years. Through every contumely and outrage heaped upon him by the idolaters, through every persecution, Khadija was his dearest companion and helper. He loved her very deeply and did not marry any other woman during her lifetime. This marriage is the ideal of intimacy, friendship, mutual respect, support and consolation, for all marriages. Though faithful and loyal to all his wives, he never forgot Khadija after her death and mentioned her virtues and merits extensively on many occasions. The Prophet did not marry for another four to five years after Khadija's death. Providing their daily food and provisions, bearing their troubles and hardships, Muhammad, upon him be peace, looked after his children and performed the duties of mother as well as father. To allege of such a man that he was a sensualist or suffered from lust for women, is as disgraceful and as stupid a lie as can be imagined. For if there were even the least grain of truth in it, he could not have lived as we know that he did.

'A'isha, may God be pleased with her, was his second wife, though not in the order of marriages. She was the daughter of his closest friend and devoted follower, Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr, one of the earliest converts to Islam had long hoped to cement the deep attachment that existed between himself and the Prophet, by giving to him his daughter in marriage. By marrying 'A'isha the Prophet accorded the highest honour and courtesy to a man who had shared all the good and bad times with him throughout his mission.

'A'isha, who proved to be a remarkably intelligent and wise woman, had both the nature and temperament to carry forward the work of Prophetic mission. Her marriage was the schooling through which she was prepared as a spiritual guide and teacher to the whole of the female world. She became one of the major students and disciples of the Prophet and through him, like so many of the Muslims of that blessed time, her skills and talents were matured and perfected, so that she joined him in the abode of bliss both as wife and as student. Her life and her services to Islam after her marriage prove that such an exceptional person was worthy to be the wife of the Prophet. For, when the time came, she proved herself one of the greatest authorities on Hadith, an excellent commentator on the Qur'an and a most distinguished and knowledgeable expert (*faqih*) in Islamic law. She truly represented the inward and outward qualities and experiences (*zahir* and *batin*) of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, through her unique understanding.

Umm Salama, may God be pleased with her, was from the clan of Makhzum. She was first married to her cousin. The couple had embraced Islam at the very beginning and emigrated to Abyssinia, to avoid the persecutions of the Quraysh. After returning from Abyssinia, the couple and their four children migrated to Madina. Her husband participated in many battles and received severe wounds at the battle of Uhud from which he later died. Abu Bakr and 'Umar proposed marriage to Umm Salama, aware of her needs and suffering as a widow with children to support and no means of doing so. She refused because, according to her judgement, no one could be better than her late husband.

Some time after that, the Prophet himself offered to marry her. This was quite right and natural. For this great woman, who had never shied from sacrifice and suffering for her faith in Islam, was now alone after having lived many years in the noblest clan of Arabia. She could not be neglected and left to beg her way in life. Considering her piety, sincerity and all that she had suffered, she certainly deserved to be helped. By taking her into his household, the Prophet was doing what he had been doing since his youth, namely befriending those who were lacking in friends, supporting those who were unsupported, protecting those who were unprotected.

Umm Salama was intelligent and quick in comprehension just as 'A'isha was. She had all the capacities and gifts to become a spiritual guide and teacher. When the gracious and compassionate Prophet took her under his protection, a new student to whom all the female world would be grateful, was accepted into the school of knowledge and guidance. Let us recall that, at this time, the Prophet was approaching the age of sixty. For him to have married a widow with many children, to have accepted the expenses and responsibilities that entailed, cannot be understood otherwise than in humble admiration for the infinite reserves of his humanity and compassion.

Umm Habiba, may God be pleased with her, was the daughter of Abu Sufyan who, for a long time had been the most determined enemy of the Prophet's mission, and the most determined supporter of kufr (unbelief). Yet his daughter was one of the earliest converts to Islam. She emigrated to Abyssinia because of persecution by the unbelievers. Whilst there, her husband died and she was all alone, and desperate, in exile.

The Companions of the Prophet were then few in number and had little in the way of material wealth to support themselves, let alone to support others. What then were the practical options open to Umm Habiba? She might convert to Christianity in Abyssinia and so obtain support from the Christians, but that was unthinkable. She might return to her father's home, now a headquarters of the war against Islam, but that too was unthinkable. She might wander from household to household as a beggar, but again it was an unthinkable option for one who belonged to one of the richest and noblest Arab families to bring shame upon her family name by doing so.

God recompensed Umm Habiba for all that she lost or sacrificed in the way of Islam. She had suffered a lonely exile in an insecure environment among people of a race and religion different from her own; she was made wretched too by her husband's death. The Prophet, on learning of her plight, responded by sending an offer of marriage through the king Negus. This was an action both noble and generous, and a practical proof of the verse: *We have not sent you save as a mercy for all creatures* (*al-Anbiya'*, 21.107).

Through this marriage, the powerful family of Abu Sufyan came to be linked with the person and household of the Prophet, something that led them to adopt a different attitude to Islam. It is also correct to trace the influence of this marriage, beyond the family of Abu Sufyan, on all the Umayyads, who ruled the Muslims for almost a hundred years.

The clan whose members had been the most fanatical in their hatred of Islam produced some of Islam's most renowned warriors, administrators and governors in the early period. Without doubt it was the marriage to Umm Habiba that began this change: the Prophet's depth of generosity and magnanimity of soul surely overwhelmed them.

Zaynab bint Jahsh, may God be pleased with her, was also a lady of noble birth, descended and a close relative of the Prophet. She was, moreover, a woman of great piety, who fasted much, kept long vigils, and gave generously to the poor. When the Prophet asked for the hand of Zaynab for Zayd, Zaynab's family and Zaynab herself were at first unwilling. The family had hoped to marry their daughter to the Prophet. Naturally, when they realized that it was the Prophet's wish that Zaynab should marry Zayd, they all consented out of deference to their love for the Prophet and his authority. In this way, the marriage took place.

Zayd had been taken captive as a child in the course of tribal wars and sold as a slave. The noble Khadija whose slave he was, presented him to Muhammad, upon him be peace, on the occasion of her marriage to the future Prophet. The Prophet immediately gave Zayd his freedom and shortly afterwards adopted him as his son. The reason for his insistence on Zayd's marriage to Zaynab was to establish and fortify equality between the Muslims, to make this ideal a reality. His desire was to break down the ancient Arab prejudice against a slave or even freedman marrying a 'free-born' woman. The Prophet was therefore starting this hard task with his own relatives.

The marriage did not bring happiness to either Zaynab or Zayd. Zaynab, the lady of noble birth, was a good Muslim of a most pious and exceptional quality. Zayd, the freedman, was among the first to embrace Islam, and he too was a good Muslim. Both loved and obeyed the Prophet, but their marriage was unsustainable because of their mutual incompatibility. Zayd found it no longer tolerable and on several occasions expressed the wish to divorce. The Prophet, however, insisted that he should persevere with patience and that he should not separate from Zaynab. Then, on an occasion while the Prophet was in conversation, the Angel Gabriel came and a Divine Revelation was given to him (*Bukhari*, Tawhid, 22). The Prophet's marriage to Zaynab was announced in the revealed verses as a bond already contracted: We have married her to you (*al-Ahzab*, 33.37). This command was one of the severest trials the Prophet had yet had to face. For he was commanded to do a thing contrary to the traditions of his people, indeed it was a taboo. Yet it had to be done for the sake of God, just as God commanded. 'A'isha later said: Had the Messenger of God been inclined to suppress anything of what was revealed to him, he would surely have suppressed this verse (*Bukhari* and *Muslim*).

Zaynab proved herself most worthy to be the Prophet's wife; she was always aware of the responsibilities as well as the courtesies proper to her role, and fulfilled those responsibilities to universal admiration.

In the *jahiliyya*, an adopted son was regarded as a natural son, and an adopted son's wife was therefore regarded as a natural son's wife would be. According to the Qur'anic verse, those who have been 'wives of your sons proceeding from your loins' fall within the prohibited degrees of marriage. But this prohibition does not relate to adopted sons with whom there is no real consanguinity. What now seems obvious was not so then. The pagan taboo against marrying the former wives of adopted sons was deeply rooted. It was to uproot this custom that the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab was commanded by the Revelation.

Juwayriya bint Harith, may God be pleased with her, was one of a large number of captives taken by Muslims in a military expedition. She was the daughter of Harith, chief of the defeated Banu Mustaliq clan. She was held captive, like other members of her proud family, alongside the 'common' people of her clan. When Juwayriya was taken to the Prophet, upon him be peace, she was in considerable distress, not least because her kinsmen had lost everything and her emotions were a profound hate and enmity toward the Muslims. The Prophet understood the wounded pride and dignity and the suffering of this woman; more than that he understood also, in his sublime wisdom, how to resolve the problem and heal that wounded pride. He agreed to pay her ransom, set her free and offered to take her as his wife. How gladly Juwayriya accepted this offer can easily be imagined.

About a hundred families, who had not yet been ransomed, were all set free when the *Ansar* (the Helpers) and the *Muhajirun* (the Emigrants) came to realize that the Bani Mustaliq were now among the Prophet's kin by marriage. A tribe so honoured could not be allowed to remain in slavery (Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 6,277). In this way the hearts of Juwayriyah and all her people were won.

Safiyya, may God be pleased with her, was the daughter of Huyayy, one of the chieftains of the Jewish tribe of Khaybar, who had persuaded the Bani Qurayza to break their treaty with the Prophet. From her earliest years she saw her family and relatives determined in opposition to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. She had lost her father, brother and husband at the hands of Muslims, and herself became one of their captives. The attitudes and actions of her family and relatives might have nurtured in her a deep indignation against the Muslims and a desire for revenge. But three days before the Prophet, upon him be peace, arrived at Khaybar, and Safiyya fell captive in the battle, she had seen in a dream a brilliant moon coming out from Madina, moving towards Khaybar, and falling into her lap. She later said: 'When I was captured I began to hope that my dream would come true.' When she was brought before him as a captive, the Prophet generously set her free and offered her the choice between remaining a Jew and returning to her people or entering Islam and becoming his wife. 'I chose God and his Messenger', she said. Shortly after that, they were married.

Elevated to the Prophet's household she had the title of 'mother of the believers'. The Companions of the Prophet honoured and respected her as 'mother'; she witnessed at first hand the refinement and true courtesy of the men and women whose hearts and minds were submitted to God. Her attitude to her past experiences changed altogether, and she came to appreciate the great honour of being the Prophet's wife. As a result of this marriage, the attitude of many Jews changed as they came to see and know the Prophet closely.

Sawda bint Zam'a, may God be pleased with her, was the widow of one Sakran. Sakran and Sawdah were among the first to embrace Islam and had been forced to emigrate to Abyssinia to escape the persecution of the idolaters. Sakran died in exile and left his wife utterly destitute. As the only means of assisting the poor woman, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, though himself distressed for the means of daily subsistence, married Sawda. This marriage took place some time after the death of the noble Khadija.

Hafsa, may God be pleased with her, was the daughter of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the future second Caliph of Islam. This good lady had lost her husband who emigrated to both Abyssinia and Madina and who died of wounds received in battle in the path of God. She remained without a husband for a while. 'Umar also desired, like Abu Bakr, the honour and blessing of being close to the Prophet in this world and in the Hereafter, so that the Prophet, upon him be peace, took Hafsa as his wife so as to protect and help the daughter of his faithful disciple.

Such were the circumstances and noble motives of the several marriages of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace. We see that these marriages were intended to provide helpless or widowed women with dignified subsistence in the absence of all other means; to console and honour enraged or estranged tribespeople, to bring those who had been enemies into some degree of relationship and harmony; to gain for the cause of Islam certain uniquely gifted individuals, in particular some exceptionally talented women; to establish new norms of relationship between different people within the unifying brotherhood of faith in God; and to honour with family bonds the men who were to be the first leaders of the Muslim ummah after him. These marriages had nothing at all to do with self-indulgence or personal desire or lust or any other of the absurd and vile charges laid against the Prophet by Islam's embittered enemies. With the exception of 'A'isha, all of the Prophet's wives were widows, and all his marriages (after that with the noble Khadijah) were contracted when he was already an old man. Far from being acts of self-indulgence then, these marriages were acts of self-discipline.

The number of the wives the Prophet had was a special dispensation within the law of Islam and unique to his person. However, when the Revelation restricting polygamy came, the Prophet's marriages had already been contracted. Thereafter, the Prophet was also prohibited to marry again.



PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT II

THE MILITARY DIMENSION OF THE PROPHETHOOD OF MUHAMMAD

Jihad in Islam

Islam is the religion appointed by God for the welfare of mankind, individually and collectively, in both worlds. It is based on belief in and worship of God, without associating with Him any partners whatever.

Belief in and worship of God requires on the part of a believer deep concern with creatures, animate or inanimate. The deeper one's belief in and submission to God is, the deeper one's concern for all creatures. Belief in the Unity of God allows no one on the earth to enjoy and exercise absolute freedom in dealing with creatures.

What does Islam mean?

Islam, being a word derived from the root SLM, meaning salvation and peace as well as submission, is the expression of God's grace flowing in the arteries of the universe. Islam being the Divine system to which all creatures except man have willingly submitted themselves, there is no disorder observed throughout the universe. That is why Islam is, first of all, the religion of the universe. Everything in the universe is 'Muslim' for it obeys God by submission to His laws. Even a man who refuses to believe in God, or offers his worship to someone or something other than God, has perforce to be a Muslim as far as his bodily existence is concerned. For his entire life, from the embryonic stage to the body's dissolution into dust after death, and every tissue of his muscles and every limb of his body follow the course prescribed for each by God's law.

Implications of the principle of Tawhid

The principle of Tawhid in Islam implies the necessity of man's being in harmony with the world around him. The vast realm of the universe, which is in submission to One God only, displays a coherence and harmony of which the human world is also a part. Although the human world is subject, in addition to the general laws of nature, to a particular set of laws special to itself, yet it is also in harmony with other laws governing the rest of the phenomena beyond it. Man, unlike his fellow creatures who tread 'the path of nature', is endowed with the power of free will. He carries the gift of freedom together with the obligation to harmonize his life with the rest of nature – a harmony which is also the path of his

exaltation and progress. This is the path upon which God has originated the nature of mankind:

> Set your face to the religion, a man of pure faith – God's original nature in which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know it not. (al-Rum, 30.30)

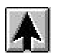
In order to be able to harmonize his life with the rest of nature, man should, first of all, realize his own personal integrity. This requires his application of his free will to his energies to keep them within the correct limits established by God. If he does not recognize any limits to his desire, he may, for example, usurp the property of others, seek illicit sexual relations, and so on. If, again, he does not recognize any limits to the use of his intellect, he may exploit it to deceive others. That is why man's powers must be held in check: his intellect must be exercised with 'wisdom', and his desire and anger restrained by lawfulness and moderation. We should remember too that man is a social being; if he does not restrain himself as demanded by God, certainly wrongdoing, injustice, exploitation, disorder and revolutions will occur in society.

Peace and justice instead of disorder and wrongdoing

God does not approve wrongdoing and disorder. He wills that human beings should live in peace and, accordingly, that justice should prevail amongst them. It is, therefore, incumbent upon those who believe in One God and worship Him faithfully to secure justice in the world. Islam calls this responsibility jihad.

Jihad denotes, literally, doing one's utmost to achieve something. It is not the equivalent of war, for which the Arabic word is qital. Jihad has a wider connotation and embraces every kind of striving in God's cause. A mujahid is a person who is sincerely devoted to his cause, who uses all his physical, intellectual and spiritual capacity to serve it and employs all the force he commands in confronting any power which might stand in its way, and, whenever necessary, does not shirk risking his very life for it. All this is jihad. Jihad in the way of God is that striving in which man engages exclusively to win God's good pleasure, to establish the supremacy of His religion and to make His Word prevail.

Besides jihad, the principle of amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa nahy an al-munkar (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil) seeks to convey the message of Islam to all human beings in the world and to establish a model Islamic community on a world-wide basis. The Islamic community is introduced by the Qur'an as a model community, one that is required to make every effort in either communicating to mankind what the Prophet communicated to them, or in exemplifying in their own lives what the Prophet, by his own conduct, translated into actual practice: Thus, We have made you a community justly balanced, that you might be witnesses for all mankind, and the Messenger may be a witness for you (al-Baqara, 2.143).



Stages of Jihad and Its Main Principles

The first command: Read!

The first revelation which came to God's Messenger was the command read!. This command, coming as it did at a time when there was nothing yet to read, meant that a believer should exercise all his faculties, intellectual and spiritual, in discerning God's acts in the universe and His laws in the creation and operation of the universe. Through this discernment, he is to purify himself, his mind, of all the superstitions coming from ignorance and, through observation and contemplation, equip himself with true knowledge.

What does 'reading' mean?

Man is not a being composed of only the mind; God has endowed him with many faculties each of which needs satisfaction. So, while feeding his mind, on the one hand, with Divine 'signs' manifested in the universe, he will cleanse his 'heart', on the other, of all his sins. He will live a balanced life in awareness of being supervised by God and continuously ask for His forgiveness. He will break, through seeking God's forgiveness, the desires of his carnal self for forbidden things, and, through prayer, he will ask God to enable him to always do good deeds.

The command read!, thus signifies an action. For God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, it meant that, since God's Messenger was absolutely pure in spirit and had no superstitions at all, he would have to start his mission as a Messenger of God. He was to recite to people the revelations of God, and instruct them in His signs in the universe, and by doing that, he would purify their minds of all the superstitions of the Age of Ignorance and their hearts of all their sins. He would enlighten them, intellectually and spiritually, by instructing them in both the 'Revealed Book of God', the Qur'an, and His 'Created Book', that is, the universe:

> We have sent among you, of yourselves, a Messenger who recites to you Our signs, purifies you, and instructs you in the Book and in the Wisdom, and also instructs you in what you know not. (al-Baqara, 2.151)

After he received the first revelation, the command read!, God's Messenger returned home in excitement. He was sleeping wrapped in a cloak, 'enwrapped' by the suffering of people and the heaviness of his responsibility, when God commanded him:

> O you enwrapped one, keep vigil the night long, save a little (a half of it, or diminish a little, or add a little), and chant the Qur'an in measure. For We shall charge you with a word of weight. (al-Muzzammil, 73.1-5)

The short period between the first revelation and the beginning of the communication of the Message to the others, the period marked by verses such as those above was of a preliminary kind for God's Messenger. He had to prepare himself to perform the duty of conveying God's Word of Weight, the Qur'an. He was to keep vigil the night long and recite the Qur'an in measure, because the vigil of the night is a time when impression is more keen and recitation more penetrating.

Jihad entails, besides conveying the Message to others, a believer's struggle with his carnal self to build his genuine, spiritual character, overflowing with belief and inflamed with love. Jihad, with these two dimensions of it, continues, in the individual sphere, until the believer's death, and up to the Last Day in the collective sphere. So, a short while after God's Messenger received the order to keep vigil the night long, the following revelation came to him:

> O you enshrouded one, arise and warn! Your Lord magnify; Your robes purify and defilement flee! And show not favor, seeking worldly gain! For the sake of your Lord, be patient! (al-Muddaththir, 74.1-7)

By these revelations, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, was ordered to begin the preaching of Islam. He started from his relatives of the nearest kin and, after the command, Warn your tribe of nearest kindred (al-Shu'ara', 26.214), his call encompassed his tribe. This was followed by public preaching and, predictably, by reactions such as derisions, threats, tortures, offers of the most alluring kind and boycotting.

Retaliation is not essential

In Makka, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never resorted to, nor allowed, retaliation. For Islam came not to make mischief nor to cause dissentions among people. It came, in the words of Amir ibn Rabi', the Muslim envoy to the Persian commander in the war of Qadisiyya during the caliphate of 'Umar, to bring people out of the darkness of unbelief into the light of belief, to free them from 'servanthood' to servants to make them the servants of One God, and to elevate them from the pit of 'earth' to the height of 'heaven'. Also, as stated earlier, Islam, literally meaning peace, salvation and submission, came to establish peace, first, in the inner worlds of human beings themselves, making them at peace with God, nature and themselves, and, then, in the entire world and universe. For this reason, peace and order are fundamental in Islam. It always seeks to spread in a peaceful atmosphere and refrains from resorting to force as much as possible. Islam never approves injustice in whatever form it is, and severely forbids bloodshed. According to the Qur'an:

> Whoever slays a soul not to retaliate for a soul slain or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had slain all mankind, and whoever 'gives life' to a soul, it shall be as if he had 'given life' to the whole of mankind. (al-Ma'ida, 5.32)

Calling with wisdom and fair exhortation

Coming to eradicate injustice and corruption on the earth, and to 'unite' the earth with the heavens in peace and harmony, Islam seeks to call people with wisdom and fair exhortation, and does not resort to force until those who desire to maintain the corrupted order they built on injustice, oppression, self-interest and exploitation of others and usurpation of their rights, resist it to prevent its preaching. Thus, Islam allows the use of force in the following cases:

In which cases can force be used?

1. If unbelievers or polytheists or those who make mischief and corruption on the earth resist the preaching of Islam and try to block its way of conquering the minds and hearts of people. Being a God-revealed religion of truth, Islam aims to secure the well-being and happiness of mankind in both worlds and therefore has the right to enjoy the freedom of presenting itself to people. In case it is resisted or prevented, it offers its enemies three alternatives: either they will accept Islam, or allow its preaching or admit its rule. If they reject all three alternatives, Islam allows the use of force.

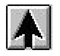
2. God permitted His Messenger to resort to the 'sword' only after he emigrated to Madina and established an independent state there. This permission was given because the Muslims were wronged (al-Hajj, 22.39). The verses revealed to express this permission are worth mentioning in order to understand the true nature of war in Islam and for what purposes it was made lawful:

(Fighting is) permitted to those who are fought against, because they have been wronged; and surely God is able to give them victory. Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: 'Our Lord is God'. For had it not been for God's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the Name of God is much mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Assuredly God helps one who helps Him [His religion]. Surely God is All-Strong, All-Mighty. Those who, if We give them power in the land, establish worship and pay the poor-due and enjoin the good and forbid the evil. And God's is the sequel of events. (al-Hajj, 22. 39-41)

It is clear from the verses above, and has been witnessed by history, that Islam resorts to force in order to defend itself and establish the freedom of belief. So, under the rule of Islam, the followers of other religions – Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, etc. – are free to practice their religion. It is a historical fact which has been acknowledged even by many Western writers, that Christians and Jews have lived the most prosperous and happiest period of their history under the rule of Islam.

3. Islam, being the true religion revealed by God, the Lord of the Worlds, the All-Just and All-Compassionate, never approves any injustice in any part of the world. Besides, as declared in the verse, Surely We have written (decreed) in the Psalms after the Torah (and remind once more in the Qur'an) that My righteous servants will inherit the earth. (Al-Anbiya', 21.105), the righteous servants of God are charged with the duty of submitting the earth to God's rule, which depends on absolute justice and worship of only One God. They are also obliged to strive until persecution and the worship and obedience of false deities and unjust tyrants come to an end. For this reason, Islam orders its followers to fight for the cause of the feeble and oppressed among world people:

> How should you not fight for the cause of God and of the feeble and oppressed among men and women and children, who are crying: 'Our Lord! Bring us forth from out of this town whose people are oppressors! Oh, give us from your presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Your presence some defender!' (al-Nisa', 4.75)



Some Rules in Performing Jihad

A believer cannot transgress the limits established by God. Therefore, he must observe the rules prescribed by God for fighting. Some of these rules which we have deduced from the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, are as follows:

1. A believer is one from whom God has bought his life and wealth in exchange for Paradise (al-Tawba, 9.111). He has dedicated himself to the cause of God and intends only to gain His good pleasure. So, whoever fights for other causes such as fame or material gain, or for racial or other ideological considerations of similar nature, he will not be regarded as a fighter with whom God is pleased.

2. God decrees in the Qur'an:

> Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. God does not love transgressors. (al-Baqara, 2.190)

The believers are told that they should not take up arms against those who are not in opposition to the true faith, and that they should not resort to unscrupulous methods or to the indiscriminate killing and pillage which have characterized the wars of every era of ignorance, whether in the past or at present. The excesses alluded to in the verse above are acts such as taking up arms against women and children, the old and the injured, mutilation of the dead bodies of the enemy, devastation through the destruction of fields and livestock, and other similar acts of injustice and brutality. The verse stresses that force should be used only when its use is unavoidable, and only to the extent that is absolutely necessary.

What should be done when fighting is inevitable and unavoidable?

3. Where fighting is absolutely necessary and inevitable, the holy Qur'an exhorts believers not to avoid fighting. To this end:

a. They must not show any neglect in making the necessary preparations and taking the required precautions. They must prepare themselves morally and attain the spiritual state that twenty of them can overcome two hundred of the enemy:

> O Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty steadfast men they shall

> overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred steadfast they shall overcome a thousand of those who do not believe, because they [the unbelievers] are a folk without understanding and sound judgement. (al-Anfal, 8.65)

> Those who knew that they would meet their Lord exclaimed: 'How many a little company has overcome a mighty host by God's leave! God is with the steadfast.' (al-Baqara, 2.249)

In order to attain such a rank, the belief and trust of a Muslim in God should be very strong, and he should do his utmost to refrain from sins. Belief and God-fearing are two unbreakable 'weapons' of a Muslim, his two sources of inexhaustible power :

> Faint not nor grieve, for you shall surely gain the upper hand if you are true men of faith. (Al-'Imran, 3.139)

> The sequel is for the God-fearing people. (al-A'raf, 7.128)

b. Besides the moral strength coming from sound belief and God-fearing, believers should also equip themselves with the most sophisticated weaponry. Force has an important place in obtaining the desired result, so believers cannot be indifferent to it. Rather, they must be much more advanced in science and technology than unbelievers so that they should not allow unbelievers to use 'force' for their selfish benefit. According to Islam, 'right is might'; so, in order to prevent might from being right in the hands of unbelievers and oppressors, believers must be mightier than others. This is explicit in the Qur'an:

> Make ready for them all you can of armed force and of horses tethered, that thereby you may dismay the enemy of God and your enemy, and others beside them whom you know not, God knows them. Whatever you spend in the way of God it will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged. (al-Anfal, 8.60)

An Islamic state should be so powerful as to discourage the party of unbelief and oppression from attempting to attack it, nor should they be able to contemplate subjugating weak states of the world. It should be able to secure peace and justice in the world and no power should have the courage to make corruption in any part of the earth. This will be possible when Muslims equip themselves with a strong belief and righteousness in all their affairs, and also with scientific knowledge and the most sophisticated technology. They must combine science and technology with faith and good morals and use them in the service of humankind. For, as stated at the beginning of the chapter, belief in God calls for serving people and the deeper one is in belief in God, the deeper one's concern for the created. When Muslims attain to this rank, God will never give unbelievers any way (of success) against the believers (al-Nisa', 4.141). Otherwise, what the Prophet predicted will happen. (The forces of unbelief) will be united to make a concerted attack upon you. They will snatch the morsel out of your mouths and pillage your table.

c. When fighting is unavoidable, Muslims must not hesitate to take up arms and hasten to the front. The Qur'an exhorts Muslims to fight when necessary and severely reprimands those who show reluctance in mobilizing in the way of God:

> O you who believe! What ails you that when it is said unto you, 'Go forth in the way of God', you sink down heavily to the ground. Are you so content with the life of the world, rather than the world to come? Yet the enjoyment of the life of the world, compared with the world to come, is a little thing. If you go not forth, He will afflict you with a painful doom, and instead of you He will substitute another people; and you will not hurt Him anything. God is powerful over everything. (al-Tawba, 9.38-39)

> God loves those who battle for His cause in ranks, as if they were a solid structure. (al-Saff, 61.4)
>
> O you who believe! Shall I show you a commerce that will save you from a painful doom? You should believe in God and His Messenger, and should strive for the cause of God with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you, if you did but know. He will forgive you your sins and admit you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, and to dwelling places goodly in Gardens of Eden. That is the mighty triumph; and other things you love, help from God and a nigh victory. Give you good tidings to believers. (al-Saff, 61. 10–3)

Obedience to those in power and command

d. A community is like a 'body' in structure and functioning; like a body, it demands a 'head' having intellect. Therefore, obedience to the 'head' is of great significance for the prosperity of the community.

When God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was raised in the desert of Arabia, the people resembled the scattered beads of a rosary. They were unaware of the importance of obedience and the benefits of collective life. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, inculcated in them the feeling of obedience – obedience to God, His Messenger and to their superiors – and used Islam as an unbreakable rope to unite them:

> O you who believe! Obey God, and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if you have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger if you believe in God and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end. (al-Nisa', 4.59)
>
> O you who believe! When you meet an army, hold firm and remember and mention God much, that you may be successful. And obey God and His Messenger, and dispute not one with another lest you falter and your strength depart from you; but be steadfast! God is with the steadfast. (al-Anfal, 8. 45–6)

It was because of the consciousness of obedience which God's Messenger developed in his Companions that when he appointed a young man of eighteen, the son of his emancipated slave, as a commander over an army in which many elders like Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman were present, none of the Companions thought of objecting to him. Likewise, in a military expedition, the commander ordered his soldiers to throw themselves into the fire they lighted. This was not an Islamic order, but some attempted to obey it. However, the others prevented them from committing a suicide and persuaded them to refer the matter to God's Messenger and ask him whether they had to obey even the un-Islamic orders of the authority. Although it is unlawful to obey sinful orders, obedience is of vital importance in the collective life of a community, particularly to become victorious in a war.

e. One of the important points to be mentioned concerning jihad is that a believer cannot flee the battlefield. He must be steadfast in fighting and must not turn his back on the enemy in battle. Concerning this, the Qur'an decrees:

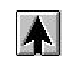
> O you who believe! When you meet in battle those who do not believe turn not your backs to them. Whoever on that day turns his back to them, unless maneuvering for battle or intent to join a company, he has truly incurred wrath from God, and his habitation will be Hell – an evil homecoming! (al-Anfal, 8.15-16)

Fleeing on the battlefield is one of the seven major, perilous sins. For the one who commits this grave sin causes disorder in the Muslim ranks and demoralizes the others. He cannot be regarded as having firm belief in God and the Hereafter and his action means that he prefers the world over afterlife. A believer may leave the battlefield only to maneuver in battle or as a tactic or to join another company

to fight in more appropriate conditions.

In the Battle of Yarmuk during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, 20 thousand valiant men fought against 200 thousand Byzantines, and won the victory. Qabbas ibn Ashyam was one of the heroes of this battle. He lost one of his legs around noon, but he became aware of it only hours later when he dismounted from his horse. Years later, his grandson introduced himself to the Caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, saying: ‘O Caliph! I am the grandson of the one who lost his leg at noon but became aware of it towards evening.’

The Muslim army was made up of three thousand valiants in the battle of Muta which they fought against the Byzantine army of about 100 thousand men. They fought heroically, and both of the armies retreated at the same time. Despite this, the Muslim soldiers regarded themselves as having fled the battlefield and were ashamed to go in the presence of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. However, the Prophet welcomed them and consoled them, saying: You did not flee. You retreated to join me. You will collect strength and go to fight with them again. It happened just as God’s Messenger foretold when the Muslim army formed by himself just before his death raided the southern part of Syria and two years later the Muslims dealt the Byzantines a deadly blow in the Battle of Yarmuk.



EARLY MILITARY EXPEDITIONS AND THE BATTLE OF BADR

EARLY MILITARY EXPEDITIONS AND THE BATTLE OF BADR

The circumstances in the early days in Madina

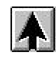
With the arrival of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in Madina, the struggle between Islam and unbelief entered a new phase. As Mawdudi, a contemporary Muslim scholar from Pakistan, elaborates in the first volume of his Tafhim al-Qur'an (Towards Understanding the Qur'an), in Makka the Prophet devoted himself almost exclusively to expounding the basic principles of Islamic faith and to the moral and spiritual training of his Companions. After the Emigration, however, people belonging to different tribes and regions of 'Arabia, who had embraced Islam, began to concentrate in Madina. Although the Muslims held only a tiny piece of the land, the whole of Arabia, under the leadership of the Quraysh, moved against them, bent upon their extermination.

In these circumstances, the very survival, let alone the success, of this small group of believers depended upon several factors. First, that they should propagate their beliefs with the utmost conviction in order to convert others. Second, that they should demonstrate the falsity of their opponents' standpoint so convincingly that there could remain no justifiable ground for any intelligent person to entertain any doubt on the question. Third, that they as the followers of the Prophet should not become disheartened because they had been driven out of their homes and were faced, through the hostility and opposition of the whole country, with economic stringency, hunger, and constant insecurity and danger, but that they should confront the situation with patience and fortitude. Fourth, that they should be able to find a way to retake all their wealth and goods usurped by the Makkans during Emigration. Fifth, that they should be prepared to resist with both courage and the force of arms the violent assault by which the enemy intended to frustrate their movement, and that in this resistance they should not heed the enemy's superiority in either numbers or material resources.

In addition to the threats coming from Makka and its allied tribes, there were, in Madina itself, three tribes of the Jews. As explained earlier, the Jews held the control of the economic life of the city. Although they had been waiting for the emergence of a Prophet, they severely opposed God's Messenger because he did not appear from among them, among the descendants of the Prophet Isaac. They felt constrained to sign a pact with God's Messenger but, entertaining feelings of hatred against him, they never refrained from conspiracies to exterminate Islam. For example, among their poets, Ka'b ibn Ashraf composed poems to satirize God's Messenger and instigate his enemies against him.

In Madina, another element of enmity against Islam also began to emerge in the form of hypocrisy. One group of hypocrites consisted of those who had no faith in Islam but had entered the ranks of the Muslim community merely in order to create mischief. Another group of hypocrites, conscious of the political dominance of the Muslims in Madina, considered it advantageous to gain acceptance as fellow-Muslims. At the same time, they maintained contacts with the enemies of Islam so that they could secure all the advantages of friendship with the two opposite camps and thus remain safe from any hostilities. There was still another group of hypocrites – those who were in a state of ambivalence and indecision between Islam and Ignorance but who had accepted Islam because the majority of their

tribe or family had done so. The final group consisted of those who, although they believed Islam to be true, found it difficult to forsake their inherited way of life, their superstitions, their customs and usages, and to discipline themselves to observe the moral restraints and fulfil the obligations prescribed by Islam.



Military Expeditions

In such severe circumstances, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, dispatched, as military measures, expeditions into the heart of the desert. In dispatching them, he had several aims, some of which are as follows:

1. Unbelievers tried to extinguish the Light of God 'with their mouths' but, although they were averse, God willed to perfect His Light (al-Saff, 61.8). So, God's Messenger desired to demonstrate that it was impossible for unbelievers to exterminate Islam, and to show that Islam was a reality that could not be ignored.

2. Makka enjoyed a central position in the heart of the Arabian peninsula. It was the most formidable power of the time in Arabia and all the other tribes felt some sort of adherence to it. By dispatching military expeditions to neighboring areas, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, also desired to demonstrate the power of Islam and to break the dominance of the Quraysh in Arabia.

During human history, the concept of 'might is right' has usually been a norm. This has been so because 'right' has usually not had enough power to hold the dominance of the world. The case was the same fourteen centuries ago in Arabia. Since the Quraysh enjoyed might and wealth, the neighboring tribes obeyed them. However, Islam came to make right might, and, in order to demonstrate this and to break the pressure of the Makkan polytheists on neighboring tribes to prevent them from embracing Islam, God's Messenger dispatched military expeditions through the desert one after the other.

3. The mission of God's Messenger was not restricted to a fixed period, nor to one nation only; rather, he was sent as a mercy for all the worlds. So, he was charged to communicate the Message of God as far as the remotest corners of the world. However, since he began his mission in Arabia, he had, certainly, to know the conditions surrounding him. These expeditions were, therefore, vanguards to be acquainted with those conditions and pave the way for the preaching of Islam in the peninsula.

4. One of the most effective ways of crushing the enemy is to stir them to unpremeditated, premature movements and thereby to always have the initiative. God's Messenger was surely informed of the contacts the Quraysh established with 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, the head of the hypocrites in Madina, to frustrate him in his mission, and he was alert to their possible attacks on Madina. Meanwhile a military force of the Quraysh was able to penetrate as far as the suburbs of Madina and, after a plunder, returned to Makka. So, by dispatching military expeditions, God's Messenger, upon him be peace, also desired to agitate the Quraysh to an unprepared, unpremeditated action against Madina to nip their plots in the bud.

5. The Quraysh lived on international trade. They sent trade caravans to Syria and to the Yemen. So, it was a vital importance for them that their trade routes should be absolutely secure. However, thanks to the situation of Madina, God's Messenger was able to threaten their trade and, therefore, while strengthening his position in Madina on the one hand, he was, on the other, dispatching military expeditions to paralyze the hopes and plans of the Quraysh to deal him any blow.

Islam guarantees security of life and property

6. Islam guarantees security of life and property. Its commandments aim to guarantee the security of life, the security of property, the security of, in addition to physical health, mental and spiritual health, the security of chastity, and the security of belief. Therefore, it strictly prohibits murder, theft, robbery and plundering, and also usurpation and interest or usury and gambling, alcohol, every kind of illicit sexual intercourse, anarchy and propagation of atheism. The Arabic original of 'belief' is iman and means giving security. Therefore a mu'min (believer) is the one who never cheats and from whose tongue and hand all people are in utmost security. He never lies, never breaks his word, and never breaches a trust. Also, he never conceives of earning his life by stealing or other un-Islamic ways like usurpation and interest-involving transactions. He is convinced that the one who has killed a man is as if he killed the whole of humankind.

When God's Messenger was raised as a Prophet, there was in Arabia no security, neither of life or property, nor of chastity or health, nor of belief, nor indeed in the rest of the world. However, he had to establish absolute security in every aspect of life. Once, he had said to Adiy ibn Khatam:

> A day will come when a woman will travel, riding in a litter, from Hira to Makka and fear nothing except God and wolves.

By dispatching military expeditions through the desert, God's Messenger also aimed to establish security therein and wanted to show to everyone, friend and foe, that security was not possible but by Islam.

Expeditions

The first military expedition sent after the Emigration was toward Sif al-Bahr. When Hamza, the commander of the expedition, reached Sif al-Bahr, a trade caravan of the Quraysh was returning from Damascus. The Quraysh had usurped all the possessions of the Emigrant Muslims left in Makka, and used them in trade. In order to threaten their trade, and weaken them economically, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, desired to make a show of power in the desert. No clash took place in this first confrontation with the Quraysh, but the desert tribes witnessing the incident showed an inclination to acknowledge a second power in the peninsula besides the Quraysh.

This first expedition was shortly followed by the second sent under the command of 'Ubayda ibn Harith. With the same purpose as in the first expedition, 'Ubayda went as far as Rabigh, a valley on the route to Makka. The Muslim expedition of sixty cavalrymen met there with a force of the Quraysh consisting of two hundred armed men. An exchange of arrows took place between the parties; in the end, fearing a possible defeat, the Makkan troops withdrew towards Makka.

Military expeditions followed one another, some of them commanded by God's Messenger himself, upon him be peace and blessings. In two of the expeditions he commanded, he went to Abwa and Buwat respectively and aimed to threaten the trade caravans of the Quraysh and intimidate them. In the former, he also had the purpose of signing a treaty with Banu Damra. According to the conditions of the treaty, neither of the sides would take up arms against the other, and the tribe of Banu Damra would not help any aggressive force against the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

Shortly before the Battle of Badr, God's Messenger sent an expedition of about ten persons under the command of 'Abdullah ibn Jakhsh to Nakhla, a place between Makka and Ta'if, a few miles away from Makka. He ordered them to follow the movements of the Quraysh and gather information about their plans. While they were staying in Nakhla, a trade caravan of the Quraysh coming from Ta'if halted there. Something happened unexpectedly and the Muslims killed one of the Makkans and captured the rest except one, and their belongings, and took them to Madina. They did this at a time when the

month of Rajab was approaching its end and Sha'ban about to begin. It was, therefore, doubtful whether the event took place in Rajab, one of the sacred months, or not. But the Quraysh, and the Jews who were secretly in league with them, as well as the hypocrites, made great use of this as a weapon in their propaganda campaign against the Muslims. They claimed that the Muslims shed blood in a sacred month, when bloodshed is forbidden.

Since the incident had taken place without his approval, God's Messenger expressly pointed out to those who had participated in the campaign that he had not ordered them to fight. Also the other Muslims reproached them for doing something not commanded. However, the verses revealed consoled them on account of their purity of intention with hope for the mercy of God:

> They question you concerning the holy month, and fighting in it. Say: 'Fighting in it is a heinous thing, but to bar from God's way, and unbelief in Him, and denying entry into the Holy Mosque, and to expel its people from it – that is more heinous in God's sight; and persecution is more heinous than killing.' They will not cease to fight with you till they turn you from your religion, if they are able; and whoever of you turns from his religion and dies unbelieving – their works have failed in this world and the next; those are the inhabitants of the Fire; therein they shall dwell forever. But the believers, and those who emigrate and struggle in God's way – those have hope of God's Mercy; and God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. (al-Baqara, 2.217–8)

The verses aimed to answer the objections raised by the Quraysh and the Jews and hypocrites. The essence of the matter is that fighting during the holy months is an evil act. However, those people who had continually subjected the believers to indescribable wrong for thirteen years merely because they believed in the One God could have no right and justification to make such an objection. They had not only driven the Muslims from their homes, they had closed to them the way to the Holy Mosque, a bar which had not been imposed by anyone during the course of some two thousand years. With this record of mischief and misconduct it was not for them to raise such an outcry at a small incident, and especially so when the incident had taken place without the approval of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

A general evaluation of the expeditions

Until the Battle of Badr, which took place two years after the Emigration, God's Messenger arranged around twenty military expeditions. By these expeditions he seized control of the desert and paralyzed the morale of the Makkan polytheists. Second, most of the desert tribes began to acknowledge the power of Islam and take the side of God's Messenger. In none of the expeditions, except one, did the Muslim warriors shed blood, nor did they wound anyone. They neither plundered the caravans nor usurped something from desert peoples. They showed in practice that Islam is the guarantee of security.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, formed an intelligence network and was informed of everything happening in the desert and in Makka itself. So sophisticated a system did he establish that probably none of his Companions in Madina even knew that, for example, his uncle, 'Abbas, was left in Makka as a member of his intelligence service. When he set out on a military campaign, no one knew, up to a certain point, his real intention and where they were going. Besides, he used couriers in communication with his soldiers fighting at the front. A courier carried the news to some certain point, where he trusted it to another one waiting to carry it to the other station. With this system, he got the news of his expeditions in the shortest time possible.

All the expeditions he dispatched until the Battle of Badr consisted of the Emigrants exclusively. For first of all, the Quraysh were at war with the Emigrants. They did not want them to be sheltered in Madina. Besides, those who were driven from their homes with everything they had left behind were the Emigrants. Second, the Helpers had sworn allegiance to God's Messenger so that it was expected that the Helpers should perceive by themselves the necessity of taking part in any military action in

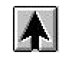
the way of God.

The military genius of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, showed itself also in his choice of commanders of the expeditions. His uncle, Hamza, was appointed the commander of the first military expedition. Besides his courage and strength, Hamza was a man of sound judgement, good opinion and high administrative ability. In addition, until the whole of his community appropriated his ideas and adopted his opinions, God's Messenger chose to practise them in the persons of his relatives. Since the military dimension of his mission showed itself for the first time in Madina, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was to put his own relatives on the front line until everyone was wholly accustomed to it. It should, however, also be noted that all of the commanders he chose were able and eminent generals and highly qualified for the job. They were, in addition, very upright persons wholly devoted to the cause of Islam.

Hamza was martyred in Uhud after having killed more than twenty soldiers of the enemy. 'Ubayda ibn Harith was martyred because of the wounds he received in the Battle of Badr. Before his martyrdom, he asked God's Messenger: 'O God's Messenger, I did not die in fighting at the front. Am I regarded then as having died a martyr?'

Hamza was the uncle of the Prophet; 'Ubayda his cousin. The commander of the expedition he sent to Nakhla, 'Abdullah ibn Jakhsh, was the son of his paternal aunt. In the second stage of the Battle of Uhud, he fought heroically. He came across Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and told him: 'Come; you pray and I'll invoke 'Amen' for your prayer. Let me pray, and you invoke 'Amen' for my prayer.' Sa'd prayed: 'O God, make me encounter one of the strongest soldiers of the enemy, and let me overcome him!' Ibn Jakhsh invoked 'Amen' for this prayer, and then himself prayed: 'O God, let me encounter one of the strongest soldiers of the enemy. After I wounded him severely, let him kill me, and cut my ears and nose and lips so that I shall come to Your Presence bleeding profusely. You ask me, "'Abdullah, where are your ears, nose and lips?" and I'll answer You: "O God, I was ashamed to come to Your Presence with my members with which I had sinned, and I sacrificed them while fighting in the way of Your Beloved One."' When the battle ended, 'Abdullah was found lying with his ears, nose and lips cut off and his abdomen lanced.

Lastly, by sending military expeditions one after the other, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, agitated the Quraysh to an unpremeditated action, and, as will be explained below, on the pretext of securing the return of their trade caravan, they formed an army of one thousand and left Makka for Badr some ninety miles to the south of Madina.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE BATTLE OF BADR

THE BATTLE OF BADR

The reasons of the war

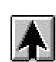
The Quraysh always felt their trade route to Syria under serious threat because of the Muslim concentration in Madina. They first threatened the Madinans, in a letter addressed to ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, to kill their males and enslave their females unless they expelled God’s Messenger from Madina. The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, put a timely end to the mischief which Ibn Ubayy inclined to cause. Besides, when Sa‘d ibn Mu’adh went to Makka to perform minor pilgrimage (Umrah), he was stopped at the entrance of the Ka‘ba and prevented from performing circumambulation. Also, the Makkans quite regularly sent invading parties. In such circumstances, the Muslims were left no choice but to gain and consolidate control over that trade route in order to force the Quraysh and other tribes unfriendly to the Muslims to reconsider their hostile policy. It was also time for the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, to give a lesson to the Quraysh and the tribes allied to them, as well as the Jews and hypocrites in Madina, that it was impossible for them to bar the spread of Islam, let alone eradicate it from the hearts of people and the surface of the earth. The front or pact of polytheism and unbelief would undoubtedly surrender to the light of Islam.

It was, at last, at the beginning of 624, two years after the Hijra that a large caravan of the Quraysh, escorted by no more than 40 security guards en route to Makka from Syria, arrived at a place within reach of the Muslims. The merchandise that trade caravan had taken to Syria to make trade consisted of the goods of the Muslims who had to emigrate to Madina. The Qurayshi infidels had usurped them and sold them in Syria in return for their needs. This had naturally caused Abu Sufyan, the leader of the caravan, to fear that the Muslims might attack the caravan to restore their goods. With this fear, he rushed a messenger to Makka and sought help and reinforcements.

This caused an uproar through Makka. The leading chiefs of the Quraysh decided to wage war on the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and about 1000 fighters moved out of Makka with much pomp and show. They had decided to deal a crushing blow to the rising power of the Muslims. They also wanted, as always, to terrorize the neighbouring tribes so as to ensure the safety of their trading caravans in the future.

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who always kept himself abreast of developments which had any bearing on his mission, realized that if an effective step was not taken right then, the preaching of Islam might suffer a blow from which it might be very difficult for it to recover. Had the Quraysh taken the initiative and launched an attack on Madina, it might have put an end to the existence of the small Muslim community in that town. Even if the Quraysh restricted themselves to taking their caravan to Makka safely by dint of their military strength, this would have adversely

affected the political and military prestige of the Muslims. Once their prestige had been undermined, their lives, property and honour would have been jeopardized.



Toward the area of Badr

Having decided to use the resources available to him, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, left Madina. Although he may have been intent upon a decisive battle with the Quraysh, most of the Muslims desired to capture the caravan and restore their goods. In order to inform his Companions of the situation, the Prophet gathered them and told them that the trading caravan of the Quraysh was in the north whereas the invading Quraysh army was in the south and moving towards Madina. He also informed them that God had promised the Muslims that they would be able to seize any of the two parties they wished (al-Anfal, 8.7)

Consultation with the army members

Now it was for them to make the choice whether they wished to attack the trading caravan or the approaching army. Aware of the Prophet's intention, Miqdad ibn 'Amr, one of the Emigrants, replied as follows:

O Messenger of God! Proceed as God has commanded you to. We are with you wherever you go, even as far as Bark al-Ghimad. We shall not say as the Children of Israel said to Moses: 'Go forth, you and your Lord, and fight, We shall remain here sitting!' We rather say: 'Go forth, you and your Lord, and fight, and we shall fight on your side as long as the eyelid of any one of us keeps moving.'

Until the Battle of Badr, God's Messenger had not sought help from the Helpers in military expeditions. This was the first occasion when the Helpers would prove their commitment to support Islam. Without addressing them directly, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, again put the same two alternatives before his audience. Realizing that God's Messenger aimed to ascertain the views of the Helpers on the question, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh rose and spoke as follows:

> O Messenger of God! I think your question is directed to the Helpers. We have believed in you, affirmed the veracity of your claim to be the Messenger of God, and borne witness to the truth of your teachings. We took the oath of allegiance to you that we would hear and obey you. O Messenger of God! Do as you wish! By the One Who has sent you with the truth, if you were to take us to the sea and plunge into it, none of us should remain behind. So take us along to the battlefield with God's blessings.

The decision was given in favor of fighting. This was also the decree of God:

God promised you that one of the two hosts would be yours, and you wished that the one with no power should be yours. But God willed to establish the truth through His words and to annihilate the unbelievers to the last remnant, that He might prove the truth to be true and falsify falsehood, even if the sinful are averse. (al-Anfal, 8.7-8)

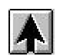
A comparison of the two armies

The Makkan army consisted of 1000 fighters, including 600 soldiers in coats of mail, and 200 cavalry. They were accompanied by singers and dancers. Whenever the army halted, dancing and drinking parties were held. Also the army arrogantly vaunted its military power and numerical strength before the tribes and localities which fell on the way, and boasted of its invincibility. What was even worse

was that they were not fighting for any lofty ideal. They aimed to defeat the forces of belief, truth, justice and good morals.

Against the force of the Makkan army, the Muslim army was made up of 313 fighters. Of these, 86 were Emigrants and the rest, the Helpers. Such was the scarcity of resources that only two or three Muslims had horses. The number of camels was no more than 70 so that three or four persons took turns on each camel. God's Messenger himself took turns with two persons. When they asked him to ride the camel to exclude themselves from the turns, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, answered: You are no better in strength than me. Concerning the reward, I am not in less need of it than you.

The Muslim soldiers were fully devoted to the cause of Islam and were fired with the zeal to sacrifice their lives for their cause. In order to accomplish what He had already decreed, God made the Makkan army appear as small in number in the dream God's Messenger had, just as He made the number of the Muslims appear smaller in the eyes of the Makkans (al-Anfal, 8.44).



On battlefield

The two armies finally encountered each other at Badr. The Makkan army outnumbered the Muslims by three to one. Moreover, the Muslims were scantily equipped. However, they would fight for the most sublime of causes, to establish God's religion based on belief, good morals and justice. They were deeply convinced of the truth of this cause and accordingly ready to sacrifice their lives. They had reached the battlefield earlier than their opponents and been positioned around the wells. Apart from that, the heavy downpour which had come the previous night, was to the advantage of the Muslims. It had provided them with an abundant water supply which they quickly stored in large reservoirs. Rain had also compacted the loose sand in the upper part of the valley where they had pitched their tents. This helped the Muslims plant their feet firmly and facilitated their movement. But in the lower part of the valley, where the Quraysh army was stationed, the ground had turned marshy. In addition to all those Divine blessings, God brought on them drowsiness and gave them a feeling of peace and security (al-Anfal, 8.11).

Muslim commanders

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, positioned his army in the upper part of the valley overlooking the whole of the battlefield, and divided them into three parts, one centre and two flanks. The central force consisted of the leading figures among the Emigrants and Helpers, who were foremost in devotion to God's Messenger. Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr was carrying the standard of God's Messenger. Mus'ab belonged to one of the richest families of Makka. He had accepted Islam as an adolescent. He was very handsome, and when he used to go out, before his conversion, in silken clothes, the Makkan girls used to stare at him from the windows of their houses. However, after he embraced Islam, he became a whole-hearted follower of God's Messenger. He sacrificed whatever he had in the way of God and finally died a martyr at the Battle of Uhud, during which he was again the standard-bearer of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. When he lost his right arm, he took the standard in his left hand, and when a blow of an enemy sword took it away too, he was left with a 'head' to protect God's Messenger, before whom he was finally martyred.

The flanks were commanded by 'Ali and Sa'd ibn Mu'adh. 'Ali was famous for his courage and deep devotion to God's Messenger. He was only nine or ten years old when he answered God's Messenger, 'I will help you', when the Messenger gathered his kinsmen to call them to Islam at the outset of his mission and asked them: 'Who among you will help me in this affair?' Again, on the night of the Prophet's Emigration, he slept on the Prophet's bed in order that God's Messenger, upon him be peace

and blessings, might be able to leave Makka in safety. Those who surrounded the house of the Prophet had thought that it was God's Messenger who was sleeping in the bed and waited until daybreak. By the time they rushed into the house only to find 'Ali in the Prophet's bed, God's Messenger had already reached the Cave of Thawr outside Makka. 'Ali was a man wholly dedicated to the cause of God.

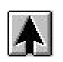
Last preparations

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had not neglected to take all the necessary precautions and perfect all the preparations for the war. He had mobilized all the resources available to him and chosen his best and most qualified men as commanders. He had stationed his army at the upper part of the valley and pitched his tent at a place from where he would be able to see the whole of the battlefield and have all his commands conveyed to his soldiers instantaneously. And, as the final prerequisite, for the desired result, he outstretched his arms and prayed with great earnestness and humility:

O God! Here are the Quraysh who in their vainglory seek to deny and cry lies against Your Messenger. O God! Support us with the help You promised me. O God! Were this small group of Muslims to perish, none in the whole earth would remain to worship You.

After the prayer, he threw a handful of dust at the enemy saying: May their faces be scorched!

The Battle of Badr was a severe test for all the Muslims. They would either gain the victory or be martyred. They were not to flee the battlefield. Although they were not forbidden to retreat in orderly fashion under strong pressure from the enemy provided the retreat was resorted to as a stratagem of war — for example, seeking reinforcements or regrouping with another party in the rear (al-Anfal, 8.15) — any disorderly flight because of cowardice and defeatism was strictly forbidden. That kind of retreat takes place because the deserter holds his life dearer than his cause, and such cowardice has been characterized as one of the major deadly sins.



The battle begins

The battle began. In the first frontline of the Quraysh were 'Utba ibn Rabi'a and his brother, Shayba, and his son, Walid. They challenged the Muslims to single combat. Three young men of the Helpers went forward against them. 'We will not fight with the farmers and spherherds of Madina,' 'Utba shouted out of an arrogance which would cause their perishing. This was, in fact, what God's Messenger expected. He ordered 'Ali, Hamza and 'Ubayda ibn Harith to go forth for single combat. Hamza, may God be pleased with him, advanced against 'Utba and killed him. 'Ali killed Walid with two blows. 'Ubayda, who was old, marched against Shayba. They exchanged blows, and the sharp edge of Shayba's sword struck 'Ubayda's knee and cut it. However Hamza and 'Ali rescued him from Shayba. They killed Shayba and carried 'Ubayda away.

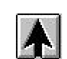
The Quraysh were shocked at the beginning of the war. The belief and sincerity of the Muslims won them God's help. The Quraysh, who had exulted in their power, suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of the ill-equipped Muslims. Seventy of the Quraysh were killed. The two young brothers, 'Awf and Mu'awwidh, from the Helpers, together with 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, killed Abu Jahl, who had been described by God's Messenger as the Pharaoh of the Muslim Ummah.22 Almost all the leaders of the Quraysh, including Abu Jahl, Walid ibn Mughira, 'Utba ibn Rabi'ah, 'As ibn Sa'id, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, and Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid were killed. Prior to the battle, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had indicated the spots where they were killed, saying: 'Utba will be killed here; Abu Jahl here, Umayyah ibn Khalaf here', and so on.

Treatment of war prisoners

Another seventy of the Quraysh were taken as war prisoners. God granted the Muslims permission to accept ransom for them. God's Messenger released some of them in return for ransom, and the others who knew how to read and write, on the condition that they should teach the unlettered Muslims how to read and write.

Such treatment of the captives proved very beneficial for the Muslims. For those people who had expected execution welcomed the chance to pay ransom and paid it. Second, the rate of literacy in Madina was very low, and, in order to propagate Islam, the Muslims had to know how to read and write. Besides, the Muslims had to be culturally superior to the polytheists. Third, those who were kept in Madina to teach the Muslims how to read and write would be able to learn Islam better than before and find the opportunity to be in close contact with the Muslims. This was certain to soften their hearts toward Islam and accelerate their conversion, together with that of their families. Fourth, the families and relatives of those captives had despaired of their lives. But, when they saw them before them unexpectedly, their enmity to Islam was considerably lessened or broken.

The decisive victory gained at Badr made Islam a force to reckon with across all of Arabia, and many hardened hearts were inclined to accept the message of Islam.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE BATTLE OF UHUD

THE BATTLE OF UHUD

Some events prior to the battle

The victory of Badr alerted to Islam all the hostile forces in Arabia. The Muslims were in a state of unease, and endured the wrath of most of the neighboring societies.

The Jewish tribes around Madina were disinclined to honour the agreements they had concluded with God's Messenger after his Emigration from Makka. During the Battle of Badr they were symphathetic with the idol-worshipping polytheists rather than with the Muslims. After the Battle of Badr these tribes openly promoted the Quraysh and other Arab tribes to urge them to unite against the Muslims. They also collaborated with the hypocrites, who were apparently an integral part of the Muslim body-politic. To serve the same end, that is, to sabotage the spread of Islam, they fanned the flames of old animosities between the Aws and Khazraj, the two tribes of Madinan Muslims. In particular, the chief of Banu Nadir, Ka'b ibn Ashraf, went to Makka personally and recited stirring elegies for the Makkans who had been slain in Badr, in order to provoke the Quraysh into hostile action against the Muslims. Also, this Ka'b spoke slanders against the Muslims and satirized God's Messenger in the poems he composed.

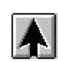
Their violation of treaty obligations exceeded all reasonable limits. A few months after the Battle of Badr, a Muslim woman was indecently treated by some Jews of Banu Qaynuqa, the most hostile to the Muslims among the Jewish tribes. In the fighting that followed a Muslim was martyred and a Jew killed. When God's Messenger reproached them for this shameful conduct and invited them to remain faithful to the obligations of the treaty they had concluded with him, they threatened him, saying: 'Do not be misled by your encounter with a people who had no knowledge of warfare, and so you had good luck with them. By God, if we were to wage war against you, you would know that we are the men of war.'

Finally, God's Messenger launched an attack on Banu Qaynuqa, and banished them from the outskirts of Madina. In addition, upon the order of God's Messenger, Muhammed ibn Maslama killed Ka'b ibn Ashraf and put an end to his mischief.

The reasons of the battle

The Quraysh were smarting from the defeat of Badr. Their women were mourning almost everyday

over their warriors killed at the Battle of Badr and encouraged them to wage war on the Muslims. In addition, the Jewish efforts to arouse their feelings of revenge were like pouring oil on flames. Within a year they attacked Madina again with an army of three thousand, including 700 in coats of mail and 200 cavalry.



Preliminaries to the battle

Informed of the Makkans' march upon Madina, God's Messenger took counsel with his Companions as to how best to resist the Quraysh. He had had a dream that he was in his coat of mail with his sword notched and that some oxen were being slaughtered, and interpreted it as meaning they should defend themselves from within the boundaries of Madina; also that a leading member of his kinsmen, together with some others of his Companions, would be martyred. Also, he knew that the Makkan army was coming with the intention of doing battle in open ground, and if, therefore, they defended themselves from within Madina, the Makkan army could not continue a long siege. With this plan he also stressed once more that the Muslims are, in reality, the representatives of peace and security and therefore they resort to force only when it is inevitable for them either to eliminate the obstacle put before their preaching of Islam or to defend themselves or their faith and country against any attack.

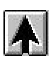
However, there were several young people who longed for martyrdom and felt aggrieved at not having had the opportunity to fight in the Battle of Badr. They were of the opinion that the enemy should be resisted outside the confines of Madina. God's Messenger gave in to the demands of the majority and decided to march out of the city to meet the enemy. Nevertheless, those young people repented, upon the warning of the elders, of having insisted on their opinions to march out of Madina, and the elders came to God's Messenger to inform him that the young people had changed their minds. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, replied to them:

It does not befit a Prophet to take off his coat of mail after he has put it on.

Advisory system of government

An advisory system of government is an indispensable article of the Islamic constitution. The advice of the learned, of the pious and of persons of sound judgement and expert knowledge who enjoy the confidence of people, is always to be sought, and these persons, in turn, are expected to speak out and express their opinions according to the dictates of their conscience with precision and integrity. This advisory system is so important to a Muslim community that in the Qur'an God praises the first, exemplary Muslim community as a community whose affair is by counsel between them (al-Shura, 42.38). This importance becomes more explicit when the fact that this first community was led by the Prophet himself is taken into consideration, who never spoke out of caprice and on his own authority but spoke what was revealed to him by God (al-Najm, 53.3-4). It is because of this that God's Messenger preferred the opinions of the majority to his own. But, since he had to execute the decision they had concluded after consultation in full submission to and confidence in God, he should not be expected to change his decision. For this would, first of all, have led those in authority to exert pressure upon others to accept their opinions. Second, if a leader changes his decision according to individual feelings and fancies, it can cause him to lose his authority and reliability. Third, any hesitation shown by the leader passes fear and anxiety on to his followers and leads them to conflicting ideas. In addition to all these, if God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had changed his decision, and chosen to defend the Muslims from within the boundaries of Madina with some undesired result, it would have caused those of the opposing view to criticize the Messenger and the leading Companions. Apart from this, spoils and honour gained through a defensive war could be considerably less than those coming from a battle in an open field, this too might have led some people to be dissatisfied and raise voices of complaint.

In his every word and deed, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, set an example to be followed by his Umma. All the reflections above refer to the kind of behaviour he showed prior to the Battle of Uhud and in his saying: It does not befit a Prophet to take off his coat of mail after he has put it on.



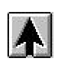
Dramatic events and last measures prior to the battle

God's Messenger, accompanied by a thousand warriors, left Madina for Uhud, a volcanic hill only a few miles from the western outskirts of Madina, with a plain stretching before it. However, half way to the destination 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul broke away along with his three hundred men. This, happening as it did just before the commencement of the battle, caused such perplexity and confusion that the people of Banu Salama and Banu Haritha wanted to turn back, but were persuaded not to.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, advanced with the remaining seven hundred Muslims, much less in number and equipment than their enemies, and lined up his troops at the foot of Mount Uhud in such a manner that the mountain was behind and the Quraysh army in front of them. There was only a mountain pass from where the Muslims could be subjected to a surprise attack. God's Messenger posted fifty archers there as guards under the command of 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr, instructing him neither to let anyone approach nor to move away from that spot, adding: Even if you see birds fly off with our flesh, still you must not move away from this place.

The standard of God's Messenger was again in the hands of Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr. Zubayr ibn 'Awwam commanded the cavalry and, Hamza, the infantry. The army was ready to begin the battle. In order to encourage his Companions, the Prophet had brought forth a sword and asked: Who would like to have this sword in return for giving its due? Abu Dujana asked: 'What is its due?' It is to fight with it until it is broken, the Prophet answered. Abu Dujana took it and was engaged in fighting. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh prayed to God to make them encounter the strongest soldiers of the enemy. Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet and who was known as the Lion of God, wore an ostrich feather on his breast. The verse revealed to describe the godly persons around previous Prophets pointed also to them:

> Many a Prophet there was, with whom a large number of God-devoted men fought. They fainted not for anything that befell them in the way of God, neither weakened, nor did they abase themselves. God loves the steadfast. Nothing else did they say but, 'Our Lord, forgive us our sins, and that we exceeded in our affair, and make firm our feet, and help us against the people of the unbelievers.' And God gave them the reward of the world and the good reward of the Hereafter. God loves the good-doers. (Al 'Imran, 3. 146–8)



The Stages of the Battle of Uhud

In the first stage of the battle, the Muslims defeated the enemy, so easily so that Abu Dujana, with the sword the Prophet had given him, advanced as far as the central part of the Quraysh army and, encountering Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, who was the commander of the Quraysh army, attempted to kill her but, 'in order not to dirty the sword given by the Prophet with the blood of a woman', spared her life.30 'Ali had killed Talha ibn Abi Talha, the standard-bearer of the enemy. Those who took hold of the standard of the Quraysh one after the other had all been killed by either 'Ali or 'Asim ibn Thabit or Zubayr ibn 'Awwam. After that, the self-sacrificing heroes of the Muslim army like Hamza, 'Ali, Abu Dujana, Zubayr ibn 'Awwam, and Miqdad ibn 'Amr thrust themselves into the ranks of the enemy and

put them to flight.

When the enemy began to flee the battlefield, the Muslims occupied themselves with the spoils. The archers on the mountain pass saw their brothers collecting booty, and said to themselves. ‘God has defeated the enemy, and our brothers are collecting the spoils. Let us go and join them.’

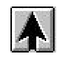
‘Abdullah ibn Jubayr tried to persuade them not to leave their posts by reminding them of the Prophet’s directive, but they answered: ‘He ordered us to do that without knowing that the matter would come to what we now see’. Except a few who remained at their posts, they took part in collecting booty. Khalid ibn Walid, who was at that time an unbeliever and who commanded the Quraysh cavalry, seized this opportunity. He rode with his men around Mount Uhud and attacked the flank of the Muslim army through the pass. ‘Abdullah ibn Jubayr’s depleted forces tried unsuccessfully to resist the attack.

The fleeing soldiers of the enemy also returned and joined the attack from the front and the scales of the battle turned against the Muslims. The suddenness of these attacks by outnumbering forces, from both the rear and the front, caused great confusion among the Muslim ranks. The enemy forces wanted to either seize God’s Messenger alive or kill him, and attacked him from all sides, striking with swords, thrusting with spears, shooting arrows and hurling stones. Those who defended him fought heroically.

Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, had lost her father and brothers in the Battle of Badr and urged Wahshi, a black slave, to kill Hamza. When the scales of the battle turned against the Muslims, Hamza thrust himself into the ranks of the enemy like a furious lion. He had killed almost thirty of them when the lance of Wahshi struck him just above the thigh and pierced it. Hind came forward and ordered Hamza’s stomach to be split open. She mutilated his body and chewed his liver.

> "O God, forgive my people, because they do not know (the truth)"

Ibn Kami‘a martyred Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr, the standard-bearer of God’s Messenger and who had been fighting before him. Mus‘ab resembled God’s Messenger in build and complexion. This resemblance led Ibn Kami‘a to announce that he had killed God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Meanwhile, the Messenger himself had been wounded by a blow of the sword and stones hurled at him. He fell in a pit and, bleeding profusely, stretched his hands and prayed: O God, forgive my people, because they do not know (the truth).



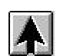
Great sacrifices and examples of unparalleled heroism

The rumour that the Prophet had been martyred led many Companions to lose courage. But, in addition to those like ‘Ali, Abu Dujana, Sahl ibn Hunayf, Talha ibn ‘Ubayd Allah, Anas ibn Nadr and ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh, who fought self-sacri-ficingly, some Muslim women, having heard the rumour, hastened to the battlefield. Of them, one from Banu Dinar called Sumayra had lost her husband, father and brother, but she was asking about God’s Messenger. When she saw him, she said: ‘All the misfortunes mean nothing to me as long as you are alive, O God’s Messenger!’ Another one, named Umm ‘Umara, fought before the Messenger so heroically that the Messenger told her: Who else can endure all that you endure? That pride of womanhood took this opportunity to ask the Messenger to pray God for her: ‘O Messenger of God! Pray to God to join me in your company in Paradise!’ The Messenger prayed: O God, join her with me in Paradise! She responded to this prayer: ‘Whatever happens to me from now on, I will not care it any more .’34 Anas ibn Nadr heard the rumour that God’s Messenger had been martyred. He fought so valiantly that he suffered eighty wounds.35 They found Sa‘d ibn Rabi’ giving his last breath. He had received seventy wounds. His last words were

'Convey my greetings to God's Messenger. I sense the fragrance of Paradise from behind Uhud.'

Besides Abu Dujana and Sahl ibn Hunayf, 'Ali stood in front of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and defended him during the battle. Once, the Messenger pointed to him some of the enemy who had come down from the hill. 'Ali repelled them. Then, the Messenger pointed to him some more of the enemy. Again he attacked them and put them to flight. The Prophet then pointed to him another group of the enemy. Yet again 'Ali attacked them and put them to flight.

Despite the indescribable resistance of the Muslim warriors around God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, defeat seemed inevitable until Ka'b ibn Malik, seeing God's Messenger, shouted: 'O Muslims! Good tidings for you! This is God's Messenger, here!' The scattered Companions advanced toward him from all sides, rallied around him, and led him to the safety of the mountain.



The Reasons for the Setback at Uhud

Before passing on to explain the reasons for the setback suffered at Uhud, it should be pointed out that the Companions have, after the Prophets, superiority over all the other people in virtue. They were honored with being the comrades and trainees of the greatest of the whole creation, one for whose sake the universe was created and who was sent as a mercy for all the worlds, that is, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. Therefore, according to the rule, the greater the blessing, the greater the responsibility, they had to be the most sensitive in obeying God and His Messenger. We read in the Qur'an that, for example, whoever of the Prophet's wives commits manifest indecency, the punishment for her will be doubled because they are not like any other women (al-Ahzab, 33. 30, 32). Likewise, a sin committed by the Companions, small as it may be, deserves severe punishment. They are all included in those 'foremost in belief and nearness to God', and they are the ones whose conduct is an example followed by later generations, so they should be pure in belief and intention, sincere in worship and devotion, upright in conduct and extremely careful in refraining from sins and disobedience.

Secondly, God has raised the Community of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, as the best community who enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and believe in One God (Al 'Imran, 3.110) and also appointed them as a 'middle nation' so that they may be witnesses to mankind, and that the Messenger may be a witness to them (al-Baqara, 2.143). But, in the first years of the Madinan era, the community of the Companions consisted of true believers and hypocrites, so God wanted to sift those who were truly His witnesses against all mankind, and also to see who among them strove hard in His Way and remained steadfast (Al 'Imran, 3. 141–2). The Battle of Uhud, therefore, became a decisive test to sift out the sincere and steadfast from the hypocritical and wavering ones, and served to make the Islamic community more stable and formidable than before.

After these preliminary notes, we can summarize the reasons for the reverse which the Muslims experienced in the second stage of Uhud.

1. God's Messenger, being the Commander-in-chief of the Muslim army supported by Divine Revelation, was of the opinion that they should stay within the confines of Madina, but the younger Companions, inexperienced and full of excitement, urged him to march out of the city. This was a mistake, even though for the sake of obtaining the rank of martyrdom in the Way of God, since the Messenger tended to apply different tactics in battles and knew in advance that the Quraysh army was coming to fight in an open field.

2. The second disobedience on the part of the Companions showed itself when the archers whom the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, had posted to defend the army against any attack from the

rear, left their posts. They misinterpreted the order of God's Messenger that they should not move away from their places even if they saw birds fly off with the flesh of their brothers fighting on the battlefield, and took part in collecting booty.

3. The hypocrites numbering three hundred, one third of the whole army, cut themselves off from the army half-way and returned to Madina. This undermined the morale of Banu Salama and Banu Haritha, who were only persuaded with difficulty not to leave. Moreover, there was still a small group of hypocritical people who demoralized the Muslim ranks during the course of the battle.

4. A number of the Companions did not remain sufficiently patient. They acted, in certain respects, in a manner inconsistent with the dictates of piety and were lured by material wealth.

5. There were some among the believers who had thought that as long as God's Messenger was in their midst and as long as they enjoyed God's support and help, the unbelievers could never triumph over them. However true this was, they came to understand by the setback they suffered that deserving God's help requires, besides belief and devotion, deliberation and strategy, and steadfastness. They also perceived that the world is a field of testing and trial:

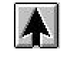
> Many ways of life and systems have passed away before you; journey in the land, and behold how was the end of those who did deny (the Messengers). This is an exposition for mankind, and a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing. Faint not, nor grieve, for you shall gain mastery if you are true believers. If a wound has touched you, a like wound already touched the (unbelieving) people (at Badr); such days We deal out in turn among men, that God may see who are the believers, and that He may take witnesses from among you; and God loves not the evil-doers; and that God may prove the believers, and blot out the unbelievers. (Al 'Imran, 3. 137-141)

6. Those who had not taken part in the Battle of Badr sincerely prayed God for martyrdom. They were deeply devoted to the cause of Islam and longed for their meeting with God. Some among them like 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh, Anas ibn Nadr, Sa'd ibn Rabi', 'Amr ibn Jamuh and Abu Sa'd Haysama, may God be pleased with them all, tasted the pleasure of martyrdom and the martyrdom of the others was delayed. The Qur'an sings the praises of them as follows:

> Among the believers are men who were true to their covenant with God; some of them have fulfilled their vow by death (in battle), and some are still awaiting, and they have not changed in the least. (al-Ahzab, 33.23)

7. Any success or triumph lies in the hand of God, Who does whatever He wills and cannot be questioned concerning His acts. Belief in the Unity of God requires that a believer must always ascribe to God his accomplishments and never appropriate for his self anything good. If the decisive victory of Badr gave some of the Muslims some sort of self-pride and if they imputed the victory to their own prudence and wise arrangement or some material causes, this, too, would have taken a part in their setback in Uhud.

8. There is an important point worth mentioning concerning the setback the believers suffered in Uhud. Among the Quraysh army there were some eminent soldiers and commanders such as Khalid ibn Walid, Ikrima ibn Abi Jahl, 'Amr ibn al- 'As and Ibn Hisham, each of whom had been destined by God to serve Islam very greatly in the future. They were the ones most esteemed and respected among the people. For the sake of their future service for Islam, God may not have willed to hurt their feelings of honour completely. So, as expressed by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, the Companions of the future defeated the Companions of the present in the second stage of Uhud.



The Qur'an on the Battle of Uhud

Finally, the following verses are to explain the reasons of that setback together with its aftermath, and the lessons which should be taken from it:

> Did you suppose you should enter Paradise without God seeing who of you have struggled and who are patient? (Al 'Imran, 3.142)
>
> Muhammad is naught but a Messenger; Messengers have passed away before him. Will you, if he should die or is slain, turn back on your heels? If any man should turn back on his heels, he will not harm God in any way; and God will recompense the thankful. It is not given to any soul to die save by the leave of God, at an appointed time. Whoso desires the reward of this world, We will give him of this; and whoso desires the reward of the other world, We will give him of that; and We will recompense the thankful. (Al 'Imran, 3. 144–5)
>
> God fulfilled His pledge to you when by His leave you blasted them, until you lost heart, and quarrelled about the matter, and disobeyed, after He had shown you that you longed for. Some of you sought this world and some of you sought the next. Then He turned you from them, that He might try you; and He has pardoned you; and God is bounteous to the believers. When you were going up, not twisting about for anyone, and the Messenger was calling you in your rear; so He rewarded you with grief after grief that you might not sorrow for what escaped you neither for what smote you; and God is aware of the things you do. (Al 'Imran, 3. 152–3)
>
> Those of you who turned away on the day two hosts encountered – Satan made them slip because of some of their lapses; but God has pardoned them; God is All-Forgiving, All-Clement. (Al 'Imran, 3. 155)
>
> O believers, be not as the unbelievers who say concerning their brothers, when they journey in the land, or are upon expeditions, 'If they had been with us, they would not have died and not been slain' – that God may make that an anguish in their hearts. For God gives life, and He makes to die; and God sees the things you do. If you are slain or die in God's way, forgiveness and mercy from God are a better thing than what they amass; surely if you die or are slain, it is unto God you shall be mustered. (Al 'Imran, 3.156–8)
>
> If God helps you, none can overcome you; but if He forsakes you, who then can help you after Him? Therefore in God let the believers put all their trust. (Al 'Imran, 3. 160)
>
> Why, when an affliction visited you, and you had visited twice over the like of it, did you say, 'How is this?' Say: 'This is from your own selves; surely God is powerful over everything'. And what visited you, the day the two hosts encountered, was by God's leave, and that He might mark out the believers; and that He might also mark out the hypocrites, to whom it was said: 'Come, fight in the way of God, or repel!' They said, 'If only we knew how to fight, we would follow you.' They that day were nearer to unbelief than to belief. (Al 'Imran, 3.165–7)
>
> Count not those who were slain in God's way as dead. They are alive with their Lord, by Him provided, rejoicing in the bounty that God has given them, and joyful in those who remain behind and have not joined them yet: that no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow, joyful in blessing and bounty from God, and that God leaves not to waste the wage of the believers. (Al 'Imran, 3. 169-171)
>
> God will not leave the believers in the state in which you are, till He shall distinguish the corrupt from the good, and God will not inform you of the Unseen; but God chooses out of His

> Messengers whom He wills. Believe you then in God and His Messengers; and if you believe and are God-fearing, there shall be for you a mighty wage. (Al ‘Imran, 3.179)



The last stage of the Battle of Uhud and the campaign of Hamra’ al-Asad

After the confusion at Uhud, his Companions rallied around the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. He was wounded and fainted, and many of his Companions were also wounded. They had retreated to the safety of the mountain. When the Quraysh army began to leave the battlefield, thinking they had taken revenge for the defeat at Badr and seeing that they were unable to crush the resistance of the Muslims, they mounted their camels and, only leading their horses (not riding), they headed for Makka.

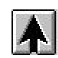
God’s Messenger was apprehensive that the Makkan polytheists might return and launch a second attack on Madina. On the second day of Uhud, therefore, he ordered those who had taken part in the Battle of Uhud the day before to gather and urged them to pursue the unbelievers. Although some people from Banu ‘Abd al-Qays, appointed by Abu Sufyan, tried to discourage the Muslims to confront the Quraysh once more, saying. ‘The people have gathered against you, therefore fear them,’ this only increased the heroes of Islam in faith, and they answered: ‘God is sufficient for us; what an excellent Guardian He is!’ (Al ‘Imran, 3. 173).39

Most of them were seriously wounded; some were even unable to stand and were carried by their friends. At this highly critical moment, they girded up their loins and were prepared to lay down their lives at the behest of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. They accompanied him to Hamra’ al-Asad, eight miles from Madina.

The Makkan polytheists had halted and were deliberating among themselves about launching a second attack on Madina to crush the power of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. However, when they saw the believers, whom they thought they had defeated so shortly before, coming towards them, they failed to muster sufficient courage and carried on to Makka.

It was the prudence and military genius of God’s Messenger that a defeat resulted in a victory. The enemy could not find the courage in themselves to march upon Madina, a few miles away, and had to go on towards Makka in the face of the resolution showed by the believers. God revealed the following verses in praise of the Muslim heroes who had participated in this campaign:

> Those who answered God and the Messenger after the wound had smitten them – to all those of them who did good and feared God, shall be a mighty wage; those to whom the people said, ‘The people have gathered against you, therefore fear them’; but it increased them in faith, and they said, ‘God is sufficient for us; what an excellent Guardian He is!’ So they returned with blessing and bounty from God, untouched by evil; they followed the good pleasure of God; and God is of bounty abounding. (Al ‘Imran, 3. 172–4)



Towards the Battle of the Trench

The Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir were originally sworn allies of the Muslims in Madina but they secretly intrigued with the Makkan pagans and the Madinan hypocrites. They even tried treacherously to take the life of the Prophet while he was on a visit to them, breaking both the laws of hospitality and their own sworn alliance. God’s Messenger asked them to leave the strategic position which they occupied,

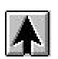
about three miles south of Madina. They agreed to this but when ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the chief of the hypocrites, assured them that his party would help them in case of war, the Banu Nadir demurred.

The Muslim army then besieged them in their fortresses and, seeing that neither the Makkan polytheists nor the hypocrites in Madina stirred a finger to help them, the Banu Nadir had to leave the city. They were dismayed but their lives were spared, and they were given ten days in which to remove themselves, their families, and such goods as they could carry. Most of them joined their brethren in Syria and the others in Khaybar.

While returning from the Battle of Uhud, Abu Sufyan had challenged the Muslims to another encounter at Badr the following year. But when the appointed time arrived, Abu Sufyan’s courage failed him to fight against God’s Messenger. As a face-saving device he sent an agent, Nu‘aym ibn Mas‘ud, who was then an unbeliever, to Madina who spread the rumour that the Quraysh were making tremendous war preparations and that they were gathering a huge army which no other power in the whole of Arabia would resist. However, when the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, reached Badr with an army of fifteen hundred fighters, they found there no one to fight with them. They stayed at Badr for eight days awaiting the threatened encounter, and when no sign of the Quraysh army appeared, they returned to Madina. This campaign was called Badr al-Sughra (Badr the Minor).

In the fifth year after the Hijra, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was informed that the desert tribes of Anmar and Sa’laba had decided to attack Madina. Accompanied by 400 fighters, he reached Zat al-Riqa’ and hearing that the enemy tribes had fled, returned to Madina.

After this campaign, God’s Messenger marched upon Banu Mustaliq, a pagan tribe of Arabia. Banu Mustaliq had made preparations of war against the Muslims. With an army of 700 warriors, God’s Messenger attacked them and defeated them.43 On the way back to Madina, the intrigues of the hypocrites to bring about dissension between the Emigrants and Helpers were brought to naught. The verses sent down revealed all their secrets and how polluted their inner world was (al-Munafiqun, 63. 1-11).



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT II

THE BATTLE OF TRENCH

THE BATTLE OF TRENCH

The reasons of the war

The Battle of the Trench took place after the campaign against Banu Nadir, who had been expelled from Madina for their treachery and who had mostly joined their Jewish brethren in Khaybar.

In the fifth year of Hijra, a group of those Jews including Sallam ibn Abi al-Huqayq and Huyayy ibn Akhtab, together with a number of Banu Wa'il, left for Makka. They urged the Quraysh to make war on the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and promised help and support.

The Jewish group then went to the tribes of Ghatafan and Qays Aylan and guaranteeing them help also, encouraged them to fight against God's Messenger.

These intrigues of the Jews resulted in the formation of a great confederacy against Islam. It consisted of the Makkan polytheists, the desert tribes of central Arabia, the Jews previously expelled for treacheries from Madina, the Jews (Banu Qurayza) remaining in Madina, and the hypocrites led by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul. The last two constituted a treacherous network within Madina.

When God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, heard, through his intelligence service, of the gathering of the allies or confederates (ahzab) against him, and the strength of their desire to fight against him, he consulted his Companions, as he always used to do. It was their unanimous view that they should remain in Madina and fight from there. Salman al-Farisi suggested to God's Messenger that they should dig a trench around Madina.

Digging of a trench around Madina

The trench took six days of feverish work to dig. God's Messenger had divided them into groups of ten people and put them to a competition. It was a hard task and time was restricted; what was more, hunger struck them all; yet all the Companions worked enthusiastically. In order not to feel hunger, each fastened a rock around his belly. While digging they recited:

We are those people who

Took the oath of allegiance to Muhammad;

Therefore we shall fight in the way of God

As long as we live.

By God, if God had not enabled us to,

We would have neither been guided

Nor given alms, nor performed prayers.

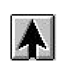
Send down unto us calmness and tranquillity

And make our feet firm if we confront the enemy!

The Messenger, who dug alongside them, and had fastened around his belly two rocks, answered them with the couplet:

O God, the real life is the life of the Hereafter

So, forgive the Helpers and the Emigrants.



Madina under threat

The allies advanced against Madina in the hope of destroying the Muslims in a battle to be fought in an open field. However, when they faced a new strategy of God's Messenger, they took the first blow. Numbering around 20,000 men, they camped near the ditch. The Madinan fighting strength was no more than 3,000, and the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza and the Hypocrites were a source of weakness as they were treacherously intriguing with the enemy. As stated in the verses of the Qur'an (al-Ahzab, 33.12–20) when the Hypocrites first saw the enemy, they were already in a defeatist mood. Not content with disloyalty themselves, they tried to infect others, who made paltry excuses to withdraw from the fight. If the enemy were to gain entrance, they were ready to betray the city to the enemy.

God's Messenger's sagacity and military genius showed themselves once more during this war. He had kept them confined within the city and stationed them in a way that they could safeguard their homes against possible attacks from Banu Qurayza. It was the most critical moments of the war when Banu Qurayza sent a man into the city to spy into the conditions of the Muslim women. However, when this man was killed by Safiyya, the Prophet's aunt, their hopes were frustrated.

Four weeks of siege

While the war was continuing with exchanges of arrows and stones, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, did not neglect to make diplomatic attempts to disunite the Allies. He contacted the leaders of Ghatafan and, offering them peace, urged them to withdraw with their people from the war. Nu‘aym ibn Mas‘ud was one of the leaders of the Allies, who before the battle, had come to Madina to sow discord; instead, he then began to incline towards Islam. During the battle, he secretly entered Islam and, ordered by God's Messenger, proceeded to stir up Banu Qurayza. Nu‘aym set Banu Qurayza against the Quraysh by telling them that they would be abandoned by the Makkans and should refuse to help unless they were given hostages from the Quraysh. To the Quraysh, on the other hand, he said that Banu Qurayza would not fulfil their promise to help and would attempt to stall by asking for Qurayshi hostages to share their plight in the case of defeat. This stratagem succeeded. Dissension among the Allies grew.

God's Messenger, supported by the mountain Sal behind, had ordered a point in the trench to be made narrower. He had expected that leading horsemen of the Quraysh would try to cross the trench

through that narrow spot. It happened as he had expected, and some of the most renowned warriors of the Quraysh attempted to cross the trench and volunteered for single combat with Muslim fighters. Among them were 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd, Ikrima ibn Abi Jahl, Hubayra ibn Abi Wahb, Durar ibn al-Khattab and Nawfal ibn 'Abdullah ibn al-Mughira.

Boasting of his strength and fighting ability, 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd dismounted from his horse in the face of 'Ali, who was ordered by the Messenger to fight against 'Amr. 'Amr advanced towards 'Ali with his sword drawn. He brought his sword quickly against him but he got his sword caught in the shield of 'Ali. 'Ali, in return, struck a fierce blow against 'Amr and the dust rose up around them. Then the words, Allahu akbar – God is the Greatest - were heard: 'Ali had killed his opponent.

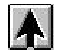
Dirar, Hubayra and Nawfal were also killed by 'Ali.50 The attempts of other horsemen or generals of the Quraysh to cross the trench were all brought to naught.

The siege lasted 27 days. It caused the Muslims much suffering, from hunger, cold, an unceasing shower of arrows and stones, and attempts and concentrated assaults to cross the trench, and betrayals and intrigues within the city. The Qur'an describes this situation as follows:

> When they come against you from above you and from below you, and when your eyes swerved and your hearts reached your throats, while you thought thoughts about God; there it was that the believers were tried, and shaken most mightily. And when the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is sickness, said, 'God and His Messenger promised us only delusion.' And when a party of them said, 'O people of Yathrib, there is no abiding here for you, therefore return!' And a party of them were asking leave of the Prophet, saying, 'Our houses are exposed'; yet they were not exposed; they desired only to flee. (al-Ahzab, 33. 10-13)

After a close investment of four weeks, during which the enemy were disheartened by their ill success and the believers proved their steadfastness and loyalty, there was a piercing blast of the cold east wind. The enemy's tents were torn up, their fires were extinguished, the sand and rain beat in their faces, and they were terrified by the portents against them. They had already well nigh fallen out among themselves. Hudayfa al-Yamani, who was sent by God's Messenger to spy on the movements of the enemy, heard Abu Sufyan's shouting: 'Come on, we are returning!' The Muslims were victorious by God's help; there were hidden forces – the Angels – that helped them:

> O believers, remember God's blessing upon you when hosts came against you, and we loosed against them a wind, and hosts you saw not; and God sees the things you do. (al-Ahzab, 33.9)



The Messenger's predictions concerning the future of Islam

While digging the ditch, the Companions had been unable to break a huge rock and referred the matter to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. The Messenger struck the rock with the pickaxe in his hand. In the light of the sparks caused by the blow, he predicted: I have been given the keys to the Kingdom of Persia; my Community will conquer it. He struck the rock a second time and, again in the light of the sparks caused by the blow, declared: God is the Greatest. I have been given the keys to the Empire of Byzantium. My Community will conquer it.

The Battle of the Trench was the last attempt of the Quraysh to destroy Islam and the Muslims. Following their withdrawal in defeat and humiliation, God's Messenger declared: From this moment we will march upon them; they will no longer be able to raid us.

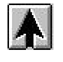
A den of intrigue destroyed

When the Allies were routed and turned their backs in flight from the Muslims, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, turned his attention to Banu Qurayza. They had betrayed their agreement with God's Messenger and been allied with the Quraysh against the Muslims. They had also given asylum to the leaders of Banu Nadir, like Huyay ibn Akhtab, who had been expelled from Madina, and never refrained from conspiracies against the Muslims.

No sooner had God's Messenger arrived home from the Battle of the Trench than Archangel Gabriel came and said to him: 'I have not taken off my coat of mail, and I am going upon Banu Qurayza'.

God's Messenger ordered his Companions to march upon Banu Qurayza and had his tent pitched opposite their fortresses. If Banu Qurayza had asked the Messenger for forgiveness, he would have forgiven them, but they preferred resistance. The Messenger remained besieging Banu Qurayza for twenty-five days. At last they asked the Messenger for surrender terms, agreeing that they should submit to the judgement of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, who decreed the sentence according to the Torah. This was the end of the conspiracies of Banu Qurayza, as well as the Jewish presence in Madina.

Sa'd ibn Mu'adh was among the leaders of the Helpers. He had been wounded in the Battle of the Trench and prayed to God: 'O God! If I am able to fight once more beside God's Messenger, make me live. Otherwise, I am ready to die'. So, he died a martyr shortly after the Jewish conspiracies ended.



TOWARDS THE CONQUEST OF MAKKA

The conquest of Khaybar

As will be elaborated later, the treaty of Hudaybiya was a clear victory, a door opened to new and greater victories for Islam. The Makkan threat came to an end and God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, while sending envoys to neighbouring countries to invite their peoples to Islam on the one hand, set out to solve the other problems he faced within Arabia on the other.

Most of the Jews belonging to the tribe of Banu Nadir had settled in Khaybar after being expelled from Madina. Together with them, the Jews of Khaybar did not refrain from collaborating against Islam, sometimes with the Quraysh and sometimes with Banu Ghatafan. As a result of the efforts made by the Jews of Banu Nadir to form an alliance against God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the Quraysh had attacked Madina with a force of around 20,000 men only to retreat in humiliation after four weeks of hopeless siege. It was time for the Muslims to put an end to the Jewish conspiracy in Arabia to secure the future and free preaching of Islam. The punishment suffered by the Jews of Banu Qurayza roused the Jews of Khaybar to make an alliance with Banu Ghatafan and attack Madina. They were making preparations for this when, after the treaty of Hudaybiya, God's Messenger marched upon Khaybar. He made as if to attack Banu Ghatafan and forced them to shelter in their confines without daring to help the Jews in Khaybar. Then, he suddenly turned towards Khaybar. The farmers of Khaybar had left their homes in the early morning with their farm implements, when they saw the Muslim army approaching the city. They went back and sheltered in their citadels, which were very formidable.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, besieged Khaybar for three weeks. One day towards the end of the siege, he gathered his soldiers and told them: Tomorrow I will hand the standard to him who loves God and His Messenger and is loved by God and His Messenger. God will enable us to conquer Khaybar through him.

When the next day came, almost everyone was hoping that the standard might be handed to him. However, God's Messenger asked: Where is 'Ali? 'He has sore eyes', they said. The Messenger sent for him and, after applying his saliva to 'Ali's sore eyes, he submitted the standard to him. 'Ali went to the fortress and, after a fierce battle, Khaybar was conquered.

Among the prisoners of war, there was a noble woman, Safiyya, the daughter of Huyay ibn Akhtab, who was the chief of Banu Nadir. By marrying her, God's Messenger established a relationship with the conquered people.

The Battle of Mu'ta

In the peaceful atmosphere brought about by the treaty of Hudaybiya, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, sent letters to neighboring kings inviting them to the fold of Islam. The king of Busra, Shurahbil, who was a Christian Arab, killed the envoy of God's Messenger, Harith ibn 'Umayr. This was an unforgivable act, from the viewpoint of both international custom and the prestige of Islam. If it had remained unresponded to, some others might also have attempted to act in the same

way.

God’s Messenger formed an army of 3,000 men, and appointed Zayd ibn Haritha as the commander. Additionally, he gave the instruction: If something happens to Zayd, Ja’far ibn Abi Talib should assume the command. If Ja’far is martyred, let ‘Abdullah ibn Rawaha take over the command. In case something happens to ‘Abdullah, choose one among you as the commander.

When the Muslim army reached Mu’ta, it met with a Byzantine army of 100,000 men. Obviously, it would be a fierce battle. The Muslims would fight one against 33 men. In the meantime, God’s Messenger was in the mosque, relating the fighting to those around him, who were unable to participate in the campaign:

Zayd took the standard. He thrust himself into the ranks of the enemy. They martyred him. The standard was taken by Ja’far ibn Abi Talib. He also rose up to Paradise. ‘Abdullah ibn Rawaha took the standard. He too was martyred. Now, the standard was in the hands of a ‘sword’ among the ‘swords of God’.

The one God’s Messenger described as ‘a sword among the swords of God’ was Khalid ibn Walid, who would, from then on, be mentioned as ‘the Sword of God’. When it was at night, Khalid stationed the troops at the rear in the front rank, and changed the wings, positioning those on the right to the left and vice versa. Having seen new troops before them in the morning, the Byzantine army was demoralized. When night fell, the sides parted with each other and retreated.

The Muslim army returned to Madina with only twelve losses. Although this was a victory for the Muslims, they were ashamed to meet God’s Messenger, who, however, welcomed them and consoled them, saying: You did not flee; you retreated to join me, and will go against them later.

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THE CONQUEST OF MAKKA AND ITS AFTERMATH

THE CONQUEST OF MAKKA AND ITS AFTERMATH

Events prior to the conquest

In the fifth year of Hijra, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had had a dream or a vision while awake that they would enter the Holy Mosque of Ka'ba in safety with their heads shaven or trimmed and without fear. As will be explained later in this book, they had not been allowed to enter Makka and made a treaty with the Quraysh at Hudaybiya, the conditions of which had, at first, appeared unpalatable to the Muslims. However, the verses revealed after the treaty described Hudaybiya as a clear victory.

The two years following the Treaty of Hudaybiya proved that Treaty to really be a victory. Some leading figures of the Quraysh such as Khalid ibn Walid and 'Amr ibn al-'As became Muslims and Islam had the opportunity to spread across Arabia. The Jewish conspiracy was put to an end and through the letters sent to neighbouring kings, Islam crossed the borders of Arabia into other lands in four directions.

It was two years after the treaty of Hudaybiya that Banu Bakr, allied to the Quraysh, attacked Banu Khuda'a, allied to the Muslims, and killed some among them. This meant the end of the truce between the Muslims and the Quraysh. No longer able to resist the Muslims, Abu Sufyan, the leader of the Quraysh, came to Madina to renew the treaty but was not admitted by God's Messenger, upon be peace and blessings.

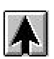
War preparations

God's Messenger was making preparations for war. As always, he was keeping the affair quite secret and no one, including his wives and closest friends such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar, knew where the campaign would be. When Abu Bakr asked his daughter 'A'isha, the wife of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, where the Messenger intended to march, 'A'isha, answered: 'Father, I do not know either where he will go'.63 However, someone from the Emigrants, named Khatib ibn Abi Balta'a, guessed the intention of God's Messenger, upon him be peace, and sent a letter to the Quraysh, informing them of the preparations of the Messenger to come against them. Revelation about that came to the Messenger, who ordered 'Ali and Zubayr to go and take the letter from the woman to whom Khatib had entrusted it. 'Ali and Zubayr carried out the Prophet's order successfully.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, left Madina with 10,000 men. Two years before, he had been able to gather only 1,600 men when he had set out for a minor pilgrimage, which concluded in the signing of the peace treaty of Hudaybiya. The peaceful atmosphere brought about by this treaty enabled many to re-consider Islam and accept it.

The Companions did not know of the destination of the campaign until they were ordered to change

their direction toward Makka. When they approached this holy city, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, ordered that each member of the army should light a fire. The Makkans used, when they camped somewhere while journeying in the desert, to light a fire for every tent, so they estimated the Muslim army to consist of about 30,000 men. They had been left nothing to do other than surrender. Abu Sufyan, who had been invited by God's Messenger to see the Muslim army, also advised the Makkans to surrender without offering any resistance.



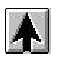
Victory crowned with utmost humiliation and forgiveness

God's Messenger, upon him be peace, did not desire any bloodshed. He divided his army into six columns, each of which was to enter Makka through a different route. He ordered the commanders to avoid bloodshed unless they were attacked. In order to prevent bloodshed and secure a peaceful conquest, he also made this announcement: Those who shelter in the Ka'ba are safe; those who shelter in the house of Abu Sufyan are safe, and those who remain confined to their houses are also safe.

Being a Prophet of absolute mercy, one who came to secure the happiness of mankind both in this world and the next, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, entered Makka, bowing on the back of his mule, as a victorious conqueror. He displayed no hint of self-pride nor thought of either vengeance or retaliation. He proceeded toward the Ka'ba in utmost modesty and absolute gratitude to God, who had made him victorious in his sacred mission. He stopped at the Ka'ba and asked those who assembled there: How do you expect me to treat you? 'You are a noble man, the son of a noble man', they answered. God's Messenger concluded:

This day no reproach shall be on you. God will forgive you; He is the Most Merciful of the Merciful. You can go away!

This marked the end of polytheism in Makka. While he was toppling down the idols at the Ka'ba one after the other, he recited: Say: 'Truth has come and falsehood has disappeared. Indeed falsehood is subject to disappearance'. And, almost all of the Makkans, who had been the enemies of Islam until one day before, acquired the honour of becoming Companions to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.



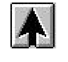
The Battle of Hunayn

The Arab tribes were awaiting the settlement of the conflict between the Quraysh and the Muslims, before accepting Islam, saying: 'If Muhammed prevails over his people, he would indeed be a Prophet.' Consequently, when that was accomplished, they began to enter Islam in throngs. This shocked the pagan idolaters, who organized a great gathering near Ta'if to concert plans for attacking God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. The Hawazin and the Thaqif tribes, who were famous for courage and throwing arrows, took the lead and prepared a great expedition for Makka. Informed of their movements through 'Abdullah ibn Hadrad, whom he had sent to them, God's Messenger left Makka with 12,000 Muslims, among whom there was a confident enthusiasm due to the new conversions numbering 2,000. In order to protect Makka from an attack and consolidate the belief of new Muslims by healing their wounded feelings, God's Messenger did not want to meet the enemy within the confines of Makka.

The battle was joined at Hunayn, a valley between Makka and Ta'if. The new converts in the Muslim ranks had more enthusiasm than wisdom, more a spirit of elation than of faith and confidence in the righteousness of their cause. The enemy had the advantage of knowing the ground thoroughly. They laid an ambush in which the advance guard of the Muslim forces was caught or intentionally pushed by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who might have planned to draw the enemy in under the guise of retreat. However, the retreat was in confusion, under a shower of enemy arrows. The Prophet, as ever, was calm in his faith and wisdom in that hour of danger and spurred his horse forward. His uncle 'Abbas was on his right and Fadl, the son of 'Abbas, on his left. While Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith was trying to stop him, he was crying: Now war has been kindled. I am the Prophet, that is no lie. I am the descendant of 'Abd al-Muttalib.

'Abbas called out at the top of his voice: 'Companions who made the pledge of allegiance under the acacia tree!' Thereupon, from all sides the Companions responded 'Labbayk' (at your service!), and rallied to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. The enemy, who had pushed themselves into the center of the Muslim army, were surrounded from all sides. The courage, wisdom and steadfastness of God's Messenger changed a seeming defeat into a decisive victory. It was by God's help that the Muslims won the day. They completed the victory with an energetic pursuit of the enemies, capturing their camps, their flocks and herds, and their families, whom they had boastfully brought with them in expectation of an easy victory.

The routed enemy took refuge in Ta'if. The Muslim victory persuaded the desert tribes to accept Islam and shortly thereafter the rebel tribes and Ta'if also surrendered and entered Islam.



The Expedition to Tabuk

The outcome of the encounter between the Muslims and Byzantines at Mu'ta had came as a shock to the whole of Arabia and the Middle East that the Romans failed to gain the upper hand even though they had outnumbered the Muslims by thirty-three to one. Ultimately, thousands of people from the semi-independent Arab tribes living in Syria and its adjoining areas converted to Islam. To avenge himself for the Battle of Mu'ta and prevent the advance of Islam, Caesar (the Emperor of the Byzantines) ordered military preparations to invade Arabia. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who always kept himself abreast of all developments which had any bearing on his mission, promptly decided to challenge the Byzantine army on the battlefield. Any show of weakness on the part of Muslims might have given a fresh release to the dying forces of Arabian Jahiliyya which had received a crushing blow at Hunayn, and also encouraged the hypocrites in and around Madina to cause serious damage to Islam from within. For the hypocrites were in touch with the Ghassanid Christian prince and with Caesar (the Byzantine Emperor) himself and had even built a mosque — the Mosque of Dirar (Dissension) — in the vicinity of Madina which served as their operational base.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, publicly appealed to the Muslims to prepare for war and, as against his usual practice, declared that the Romans were his target.

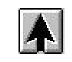
Great sacrifices

It was in mid-summer. The scorching heat of the season was at its peak, the harvest season had just arrived, and there was a shortage of material resources needed to wage a war. What was more, the enemy was one of the two super powers of the time. Despite all, the Companions responded ardently to the Prophet's call and commenced their war preparations, each Muslim contributing much more than his financial means warranted. Huge amounts of money were donated by the wealthy Companions

such as ‘Uthman and ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn al-‘Awf, and those who could not be included in the Muslim army because of the acute paucity of cavalry and other war provisions wept bitterly, and lamented their exclusion so pathetically that God’s Messenger was moved and God praised them in the verse He revealed (al-Tawba, 9.92). The occasion, in fact, served as a touchstone for distinguishing the sincere from the insincere, the true men of faith from the hypocrites.

In the month of Rajab 9 A.H./631 C.E. God’s Messenger, along with 30,000 soldiers, left Madina and marched as far as Tabuk, quite close to what was then Byzantine territory in the province of Syria. The Roman Emperor, who had indeed begun amassing a huge army, had to abandon the idea of an encounter with God’s Messenger and withdrew his army because the Messenger arrived ahead of the anticipated time and well before the planned concentration of troops had been completed.

The Messenger stayed in Tabuk for 20 days and forced several buffer states under the hegemony of the Byzantine Empire to pay the poll tax and live under his rule, and many Christian tribes chose Islam willingly. This bloodless victory also enabled the Muslims to consolidate their position before launching a prolonged conflict with the Romans and altogether shattered the power of both unbelievers and the hypocrites in Arabia.



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A GENERAL EVALUATION OF THE MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS OF GOD'S MESSENGER

A General Evaluation of the Military Achievements of God's Messenger

One of the significant points to be noted concerning the personality of God's Messenger is that he was the most eminent commander in human history. In order to understand this dimension of his sacred mission, it is worthwhile to make a general evaluation of his military triumphs:

> MUHAMMAD, upon him be peace and blessings, is the only Prophet who carried his mission to decisive victory in all aspects of life

1. There is not another Prophet who carried his mission to decisive victory in all aspects of life. When the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, who resembles God's Messenger more than the other Prophets in many aspects of his mission, died, his people were still in the desert, not yet able to conquer 'Palestine' after several decades of his preaching. Jesus' mission was mainly aimed at infusing a spiritual and moral revival into the life of the Jews who had drowned in the bog of materialism. After his elevation to heaven, his disciples succeeded in conveying his Message as far as the centre of the Roman Empire despite severe persecutions but, unfortunately, at the cost of the degeneration or corruption of his original creed.

MUHAMMAD's mission in the words of a companions of his

When the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, said farewell to the world, he left behind the whole of Arabia converted to Islam, and an 'army' of dedicated Companions, who were ready to convey his Message as far as the remotest corners of the world. He achieved this end with a handful of self-sacrificing men, who had neither heard of belief or Scripture before, nor been acquainted with anything concerning a civilized social life and world politics or good morals and self-discipline. He made a handful of desert men engaged in civil wars, unending feuds, into an 'army' of holy warriors who, equipped with belief, sincerity, knowledge, good morals, love of humanity and compassion, and imbued with activism, dedicated themselves to a Divine Cause to, in the words of Rabi' ibn Amir, the Muslim envoy to the Iranian commander during the Qadisiyya War, 'elevate men from the dark pits of worldly life to the high, boundless realm of the spirit, from the humiliation of

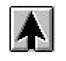
worshipping false and man-made divinities to the honour and dignity of worshipping One God, the only Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and to free them from the oppression and depression brought about by false religions and man-made systems to the luminous and peaceful climate of Islam.'

MUHAMMAD was sent to guide humanity to salvation in both worlds

2. The aim of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was never to build a worldly kingdom; he was sent to guide humanity to salvation in both worlds, physical and spiritual; he aimed at reviving people, not killing them. It is to this end that he was obliged to arrange military expeditions and sometimes to command armies. He sent out many expeditions and himself commanded forces 28 times. Fighting took place in almost half of all the military campaigns he organized during his mission, which number about 80, and only around 1,000 people lost their lives in all on both sides. Around 250 Muslims were martyred and 750 non-Muslims were killed. This means that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, established his Message and brought absolute security to the whole of the Arabian peninsula for the first time in its history, and opened the way to global security, at the cost of only 1,000 lives. This is, as so many of his achievements are, unequalled in world history.

MUHAMMAD is the first to legislate an international law

3. God's Messenger established a system of rules governing international relations among sovereign states. In other words, he was the first to legislate an international law. Although the concept was not unknown before Islam, international law was very limited – for example, there were no recognized rules for the treatment of prisoners of war. Again, God's Mesenger, upon him be peace, established a set of rules to bring a 'discipline' to fighting. For example, the following is the order given by him and his true successors to come until the present day to armies dispatched for fighting, an order which had been strictly obeyed by Muslims in their wars as Muslims:



War for peace, justice and the happiness of all

Always keep fear of God in your mind. Remember that you cannot afford to do anything without His grace. Do not forget that Islam is a mission of peace and love. Do not destroy fruit-trees nor fertile fields in your paths. Be just, and spare the feelings of the vanquished. Respect all religious persons who live in hermitages or convents and spare their edifices. Do not kill civilians. Do not outrage the chastity of women and the honor of the conquered. Do not harm old people and children. Do not accept any gifts from the civil population of any place. Do not billet your soldiers or officers in the houses of civilians.

Unequalled in taking preliminary precautions

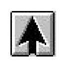
4. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never neglected to take preliminary precautions, and he left nothing to chance. He always acted with the utmost care, insight and forethought and therefore never met with any setbacks. He did not have the slightest part in the reverse suffered at Uhud. Also, he was extraordinarily successful in getting information from the enemy, without ever resorting to force or torture. Once an enemy soldier was captured by the vanguard of the Muslim army, who tried to force him to give information about the enemy's numbers and equipment. God's Messenger ordered his release and asked him how many camels the approaching army slaughtered every day to eat. Calculating how many camels are eaten by how many people in a day, he tried to work out the numbers of the enemy army.

Informed of whatever the enemy did

5. God's Messenger founded a military intelligence service and succeeded in getting all the necessary information about the enemy, but he never allowed any news about his movements to leak out to the opposite side. Before setting out to conquer Makka, Khatib ibn Abi Balta'a secretly sent a letter with a woman to his relatives in Makka about the preparations of God's Messenger. However, the Prophet was informed of this, and sent 'Ali and Zubayr to catch up with the woman and intercept the letter, which they did.

Utmost secrecy

Also, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, kept secret his military preparations and did not reveal to his Companions where he would march. He tended to take a different direction from that of his real destination and only after some while did he turn to his target. He made much use of tactics securing victory such as speed, surprise attack and flexibility of movement. In most of his campaigns, major or minor, he caught the enemy unprepared and overcame them relatively easily. For example, in the Battle of Khaybar, the Jews got news of his coming upon them only through their farmers going to their fields and so had time only to shelter in their citadels. In the same way, the Quraysh were left nothing to do other than surrender during the conquest of Makka.



Self-sacrifice in the way of God

6. Being a Prophet who brought a universal religion from God, God's Messenger educated his Companions in the aims of that religion so effectively that they were ever ready to sacrifice themselves in the way of God. This was one of the main factors lying behind the victories of God's Messenger. His Companions placed utmost reliance on and had perfect confidence in him. Therefore, he inculcated fear in the hearts of his enemies, as he himself said: I am supported by God through implanting fear in the hearts of my enemies from a distance of a month's walk. Besides, in order to demoralize his enemies he resorted to psychology. Poets like Hassan ibn Thabit and 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha wrote or recited verses to demoralize the enemy. In the minor pilgrimage they performed one year after the treaty of Hudaybiya, he ordered his Companions to run around the Ka'ba so as to demonstrate their strength to the Makkans watching them from the neighbouring hills. While running, 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha recited:

I start with the name of God,

Apart from Whom there is no other god,

And Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

O unbelievers, and sons of unbelievers, clear out of his way.

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was pleased with his recitation, commenting: His words are more penetrating to the Quraysh than arrows.

Unequalled in introducing new strategies

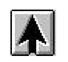
7. God's Messenger was unequalled in introducing new strategies and disuniting the allied enemy tribes. During the Battle of the Trench, the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza broke their treaty with the Muslims at a most critical moment of the battle and joined the Quraysh, besieging Madina. Left between two hostile camps, God's Messenger offered a peace treaty to Banu Ghatafan, who were in alliance with the Quraysh in the war. This discouraged Banu Ghatafan from continuing the war. He also succeeded, with a skilful maneuver, in bringing about a disagreement and mutual mistrust between

the Quraysh and Banu Qurayza. Also, during the campaign of Khaybar, he first gave the impression that he was marching upon Banu Ghatafan, who were than allied with the Jews of Khaybar. This caused Banu Ghatafan to remain inactive during the campaign, unable to help the Jews.

Unyielding resolution and determination

8. God's Messenger did what he had to do at each step of his life, and never showed any hesitation or irresolution in executing his plans or intentions. Also, he never retreated during any fighting, nor did he faint and lose heart. He stood steadfast, without moving an inch backward, during the critical moments of both the Battle of Uhud and Hunayn. He called to those of his Companions scattering from around him; Do not scatter! I am Muhammad, the Messenger of God. That is no lie!

All the Jewish tribes in and around Madina broke their agreements with God's Messenger one after the other. When they did not heed his call to them to remain faithful to their agreement, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, showed no hesitation in marching upon them – as against the Banu Qurayza after the Battle of the Trench, without taking off his coat of mail; or against the Quraysh army one day after the set-back at the Battle of Uhud – such incidents are very significant in showing his resolution and invincibility.



Having the initiative in all the wars

9. Almost in all of his campaigns, major or minor, God's Messenger always kept in hand the initiative to attack and direct the war. Even in set battles, like those of Badr, Uhud and the Trench, in which he was made the target of the attack, he did not lose the initiative and, by surprise strategies and effective tactics, he was able to defeat the enemy. He also succeeded in using time and any opportunities that arose in his favor.

A new tactic and strategy in each battle

10. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, usually changed the tactics and strategies he used in battles. For example, in the Battle of Badr, he made an over-all attack upon the enemy after demoralizing them in single combats. In the first stage of the Battle of Uhud, he kept the enemy cavalry inactive through the archers he stationed in the mountain-pass of Aynayn and, hurling his eminent warriors such as Hamza, 'Ali, Abu Dujana and Zubayr, upon the enemy, he won the victory. As for the Battle of Trench, he faced the enemy with a long, deep trench they dug round Madina and, remaining within the confines of the city, forced the enemy to retreat after four weeks of siege.

Never short of necessary reinforcement

11. The Messenger was never short of necessary reinforcement and always kept his lines of communication active. Equally, he never suffered from insufficient logistics.

Trainer of greatest commanders and statesmen

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, brought up, along with statesmen of extraordinary capability such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar and men of profound scholarship and spirituality, great soldiers and invincible commanders. His education was based on three basic elements:

1. Continuous bodily training. He usually urged his Companions to train themselves in archery, wrestling, swimming and riding horses. He sometimes arranged competitions and even running races,

in which he himself occasionally participated. Also, he attached great importance to preserving one's health and maintaining strength.

2. Good morals and being well-mannered.

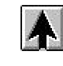
3. Devotion to God with unshakable belief, submission and reliance, and obedience to God, to himself and others in authority.

Utmost dedication to the cause of Islam

The Muslim army conveyed peace and security to the lands it conquered. Each soldier of that army was absolutely dedicated to the cause of Islam. The only criterion for them to judge between people was belief in God. They did not feel true love for anybody who opposed God and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers, children or brothers (See, al-Mujadila, 58.22). Because of this, it sometimes happened that children and fathers or brothers met in opposing armies on the battlefield.

Belief and submission made the Muslim soldiers so powerful and fearless that neither the strength of enemy forces outnumbering them nor fear of death could prevent them from conveying the Divine Message. 'Abdullah ibn Hudafa al-Sahmi was captured in a war against the Byzantines. A priest in the Byzantine army offered him Christianity so that his life could be spared, and gave him three minutes of respite. 'Abdullah responded to him:

Thank you, father! You have given me three minutes to communicate to you my religion.



THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD AS UNIVERSAL LEADER

His Appointment of the Competent Persons

God's Messenger was unique in discovering promising and competent persons in his community and appointing them to the work they could do best. Whoever he appointed to a post, he did not find any need to change him, and that person proved, through both his uprightness and competence, that he was a really good choice. This is another dimension of the Prophet's leadership which demonstrates that he was a Prophet chosen by God.

The Makkan period of Islam was inscribed in the memories of the Muslims as a period of unbearable persecutions and tortures. Not only the poor and unprotected, like 'Ammar, Bilal and Suhayb, but also those Muslims like Abu Bakr and 'Umar, who were from the elite and powerful members of the Quraysh, were severely persecuted.1 In order to save his followers from this maltreatment, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, permitted the poor and unprotected among them to emigrate to Abyssinia, but chose to keep back the powerful ones such as 'Ali, Zubayr , Abu Bakr, 'Umar and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas in Makka, for Islam needed their support to spread and implant itself in Makka. These powerful Muslims were to occupy the highest positions in the administration of the Muslim state in later decades.

Abu Dharr was a poor, blunt and upright man from the desert. When he heard Muhammad's declaration of Prophethood, he came to Makka and became a Muslim. God's Messenger used to preach Islam secretly in the earliest stage of his Prophethood. Abu Dharr was a blunt man, never restraining his feelings and always revealing the truth wherever he was. Also, he was very pious and lived an austere life. However, since public administration requires special skills, God's Messenger did not accept Abu Dharr's request to be appointed to an administrative post, saying: You are not able to manage the affairs of people. Do not apply for such jobs, for we do not assign such jobs to those who apply for them.

God's Messenger refused Abu Dharr, but he implied the caliphate of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman. Holding once the hands of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, he said: I have four viziers, two in the heavens and

two in the world. Those in the heavens are Gabriel and Michael; as for those in the world, they are Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. Concerning the future caliphate of ‘Uthman, he declared: It will be a trial for him.

The Messenger Knew People Much More Than They Knew Themselves

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, recognized his men much more than they knew themselves. Like Abu Dharr, ‘Amr ibn ‘Abatha was a man from the desert. He came to Makka and, entering the presence of God’s Messenger, asked rudely: ‘What are you?’ To this rudeness, the Messenger replied very gently: I am a Prophet of God. The gentleness of God’s Messenger was enough for the conversion of ‘Amr ibn ‘Abatha, who knelt down and declared: ‘I am to follow you from now on, O God’s Messenger’.

The Messenger did not desire ‘Amr ibn ‘Abatha to stay in Makka, because he was not able to endure the torments inflicted upon the believers. So, he told him, as he had once told Abu Dharr: Now, return to your tribe, and preach Islam among them. When, however, you hear that I am victorious, come and join us.

Years later, ‘Amr ibn ‘Abatha came to Madina, and asked God’s Messenger, who was in the mosque: ‘Do you recognize me, O God’s Messenger?’ The Messenger, who had an extraordinarily strong and keen memory (another dimension of his Prophethood) answered promptly: Aren’t you the one who came to me in Makka? I sent you back to your tribe and told you to join us when you heard that I was victorious.

I mentioned the case of Julaybib earlier. After the moral lesson of God’s Messenger, Julaybib became an honest, chaste young man. Upon the request of God’s Messenger, a noble family gave their daughter in marriage to Julaybib. Shortly afterwards, Julaybib took part in a battle and, after killing seven soldiers of the enemy, was martyred. When his corpse was brought to God’s Messenger, he put his head on Julaybib’s knees and said: O God, this one is of me, and I am of him. He had discovered the essential virtue in Julaybib and foreseen his future service for Islam.

The conquest of Khaybar proved to be one of the occasions on which God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, demonstrated his uniqueness in recognizing the potentials, skills and shortcomings of each of his followers. When the siege was prolonged, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared: Tomorrow I will hand the standard to one who loves God and His Messenger and is loved by them. This was indeed a great honour, and all of the Companions desired earnestly to deserve it. The next day came and God’s Messenger asked for ‘Ali. ‘He has sore eyes’, he was told. The Messenger then sent for ‘Ali and applied his saliva to ‘Ali’s eyes, which, as he swore by God, never again troubled him.

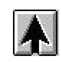
Despite ‘Ali’s youth, God’s Messenger preferred him on account of his great skills in combat and in taking command. He took the standard and succeeded in conquering the stronghold of Khaybar, which was very formidable.

Whoever God’s Messenger gave a job to, that person became successful in doing it. For example, he described Khalid ibn Walid as ‘a sword among the swords of God’, and Khalid never tasted defeat during his whole lifetime. Likewise, besides such great soldiers and invincible commanders as Qa’qa’a, Hamza and Sa‘d, he also made ‘Usama ibn Zayd a commander over a great army in which were leading Muslims such as Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, Talha and Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas. ‘Usama was the son of Zayd, a black Muslim, and emancipated slave of God’s Messenger, and was only seventeen years old or so when he was made the commander. His father, Zayd, had also commanded the Muslim army in the Battle of Mu’ta against the Byzantines and was martyred.

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was twenty-five years old when he married

Khadija, the daughter of Huwaylid, a widow fifteen years his senior. He did not marry another woman until Khadija's death in the tenth year of his Prophethood. All his subsequent marriages, after the age of fifty, were directly related to his mission. One of the important reasons for them was that his wives had different characters and temperaments and could therefore convey to other Muslim women the rules of Islam related to women. Each of them proved a guide and teacher for womanhood, and, besides, even the leading figures in the generations following the Companions such as Masruq, Tawus ibn Kaysan and Ata' ibn Rabah benefited considerably from them. The science of Hadith is especially indebted to 'A'isha, who related from God's Messenger more than five thousand Traditions. 'A'isha was also a great jurist.

Subsequent events proved how wise and apt were all the choices of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, not least in the matter of marriage.



The Wisdom of God's Messenger

A leader gains the love and trust of his people and is followed by them in proportion to his competence in solving their problems, whether personal or public, related to individual, private life, or to social, economic, political affairs touching the community as a whole.

Unparalleled in solving problems

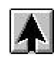
In solving problems, you may resort to force and terror, or apply sanctions or punishments like exile, imprisonment or depriving the guilty of their rights of citizenship, or torture people, or spy into their affairs. However, none of these ways are of much use in the long term; rather, they will bring about a vicious circle, in which the more you struggle to solve problems by such means, the more you entangle yourself in them.

However, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, solved all problems so skillfully and easily that no one disagreed with the issue of his decisions. Although he was sent to a people by nature and habit quarrelsome, ignorant, wild and rebellious, and sent with a mission so grave as 'to rend mountains asunder' — If We had sent down this Qur'an onto a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and rent asunder out of fear of God (al-Hashr, 59.21) – he made them into a harmonious community of peace, happiness, knowledge and good morals. Reflect closely upon the utopias imagined in the West, such as The Republic (Plato), Utopia (Thomas More), and Civitas Solis (T. Campanella), you will see that, in essence, they dreamed of the ideal society of Madina in the time of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. Mankind have not since then witnessed the equal of that society. However, if they desire to live a happy and peaceful life based on good morals and universal values such as love, mutual respect, compassion, and altruism, they have no way other than to follow the example of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

We described in the first volume how he prevented, through his wisdom, an imminent war between the clans of the Quraysh during the reconstruction of the Ka'ba. Each clan had claimed the honor of putting the sacred Black Stone in its place. However, the future Prophet of Islam, upon him be peace and blessings, spread his mantle on a piece of cloth on the ground and, putting the stone on it, invited the chieftains of the four major clans of the Quraysh involved in the rebuilding of the Ka'ba to each take one corner of the cloth. When the cloth with the Black Stone had been raised level with the spot where it was to be placed, he took the stone and placed it firmly in position. It was an ingenious plan and provided yet another proof of his wisdom or gift for problem-solving.

We also saw in the first volume how he prevented a possible moment of sedition after the Battle of

Hunayn. Also, he skillfully suppressed an impending conflict between a group of Emigrants and some of the Helpers during the return from the military campaign against the Banu Mustaliq. An internal clash nearly broke out when the army halted by the side of a well. When informed of the matter, God's Messenger immediately gave the order to march and nipped an imminent clash in the bud.'



Sacred Emigration

Emigration to Madina (Hijra) marks a turning point in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, as well as in the history of Islam. Belief, emigration and holy struggle are the three pillars of a single, sacred truth. They are the three 'taps' of a fountain from which the water of life flows for the soldiers of truth to drink from, so that they may convey their message without being wearied and, when the opposition is too formidable to overcome, set out for a new land without regard for their home, property and family. The Prophet's emigration to Madina is so significant in the history of Islam and so sanctified that the virtuous men and women around him were praised by God as (and have since been called) 'the Emigrants', and those who welcomed them so warmly to Madina as 'the Helpers'. In addition, the beginning of the era of this religious community was marked, not by the birth of the Prophet or by the first Revelation or such victories as Badr or the conquest of Makka, but by the emigration to Madina.

Despite its significance, emigration is, of course, not an easy thing to achieve. When the believers came to Madina to settle after years of persecution in Makka, they had neither any provisions with which to manage their families, nor any houses to live in. Moreover, some of them were extremely poor, and the others, who had earned their lives by trade, were left with no capital. The Muslims of Madina were mostly farmers, and the commercial life of the city was thoroughly controlled by the Jewish community. Another problem worthy of note is that the people of Madina had decided to make 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul their chief, just before the arrival of God's Messenger. The settlement of the Messenger brought this plan, and the hopes of Ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, to nothing, and he consequently became a bitter enemy of God's Messenger and, as chief of the hypocrites, never refrained from making conspiracies to ruin him. In addition, the Makkan polytheists would certainly not leave the Prophet to himself in Madina; they had contacted Ibn Ubayy ibn Salul in order to prevent the spread of Islam in Madina. Ibn Ubayy sent them the news: 'It is not something to fear that he spreads his religion here. The main danger lies in the possibility that he may ally with the Christians and Jews against paganism. That is the real threat to you.'

After he settled in Madina, God's Messenger ordered the building of a mosque, and himself took part in the work of building. The importance of the mosque for the collective life of Muslims is unquestionable. They come together there five times a day and, in the Presence of God, their Lord, Creator and Sustainer, they increase in belief and submission to their Lord, to the Prophet and to their religion, and strengthen their solidarity. Especially in the first centuries of Islam, mosques functioned, as well as being places of worship, as centres of learning. The Mosque of the Prophet in Madina was, in the time of the Prophet himself and his immediate successors, the centre of government as well.

Establishment of brotherhood among Muslims

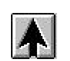
Immediately after his settlement in Madina, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, established brotherhood between Muslims, particularly between the Emigrants and the Helpers. They loved each other and were very close to each other. For example, Sa'd ibn Rabi' took his emigrant 'brother' 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf to his house and said: 'Brother, you have left everything you have in Makka. So, this house, with everything in it, belongs to both of us. Besides, you do not have a wife here, while I have two. Whichever of them you like, I'll divorce her, so that you may marry her.'

'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf answered him in tears: 'Brother, may God bless you with your wife! Please show me to the city bazaar so that I may do some business.'

The brotherhood between the Emigrants and the Helpers was so deep, so sincere and so strong that the Helpers shared everything they had with their emigrant brothers. This lasted for some time. However, when the Emigrants were accustomed to their new environment, one day they came to God's Messenger and said:

> – O Messenger of God! We emigrated here purely for the sake of God. But, our Helper brothers concern us to the extent that we are afraid we will consume up here in the world the reward of our good deeds, which we expect to get in the Hereafter. Also, we feel much indebted to them. Please, ask our brothers to allow us to earn our living ourselves.

God's Messenger sent for the Helpers and told them of the situation. The Helpers unanimously objected to the offer of the Emigrants, it was unbearable to them to be separated from their brothers. In the end, in order to save the Emigrants from the feeling of indebtedness, the Helpers agreed that the Emigrants would work in the Helpers' fields and gardens in return for wages until they could build their own houses.



A pact with the Jewish community in Madina

As a second step in solving the immediate problems which appeared after the Hijra, God's Messenger signed a pact with the Jewish community in Madina. According to this pact, which some scholars describe as a first constitution of the city-state of Madina, the Muslims and Jews were confederated as two separate, independent communities. Since, however, God's Messenger had the initiative in making this pact and acted as an arbiter in all disputes and disagreements, the new city-state of Madina was under the overall control of the Muslims.

In order to guarantee the security of this state on the part of the Muslims, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, ordered the establishment of a new bazaar. Until then the economic life of Madina had been under the control of the Jewish community. Shortly after the establishment of the new bazaar, Jewish domination of the economic life of the city declined as the Jews no longer monopolized commerce in the city.

No sooner had the Muslim community of Madina begun to become established and grow in strength than they had to respond to attacks from inside and outside. After the victory of Badr against the Makkan polytheists, the Muslims met them again, this time, at the foot of Mount Uhud. The easy victory won by the Muslims at the beginning of the battle was unfortunately followed by a reverse due to some neglect on the part of the archers. Seventy Muslims were martyred and the Messenger himself was wounded. The Muslim army took shelter on the mountain and were prepared to counter any further attack by the enemy. However, lacking enough courage for a further attack, the enemy forces left the battlefield for Makka. Nevertheless, they changed their mind half-away and again decided to march upon Madina. Informed of this decision, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, gave the order to assemble and mobilize. A single order of his sufficed for the Companions to collect themselves, even though they were ill or wounded. His every call was a breath of life for their souls, a breath that could revive old, rotten bones. Busiri says:

Were his value and greatness to be demonstrated by miracles,

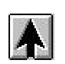
The bones that have rotted away were revived by calling his name.

The half-crushed army set out to counter the enemy. Almost all of them were wounded in different degrees, but no one desired to remain behind. In describing the situation, one Companion said:

Some of the Companions were unable to walk. They said: ‘We desire to be present at the front where God’s Messenger has ordered us to go. Even if we are unable to fight, we will stand there with spears in hand.’ They were carried either on shoulders or on backs.

Seeing the Muslim army marching towards them, Abu Sufyan, the commander of the enemy forces, ordered his troops to return. In praising those heroes of Islam, the Qur’an says:

> Those to whom the people said: ‘The people have gathered against you, therefore fear them’; but it increased them in faith, and they said, ‘God is sufficient for us; an excellent Guardian is He.’ (Al ‘Imran, 3.173)



Consultation

The sagacity or wisdom of God’s Messenger also demonstrated itself in the counsels he made with his Companions. Counsel or consultation is so important in Islam that God’s Messenger did not take a decision, especially in public affairs, without consultation. He sometimes held counsel even in his personal affairs. To cite only a few examples:

1. During the campaign against the Banu Mustaliq, ‘A’isha, the Prophet’s wife, was accompanying the Prophet, riding in a litter. At one halt she lost her necklace; she set off alone to find it only to return and discover that the army had left without her, the camel drivers thinking she was in her litter. She was later found by Safwan, who was charged with collecting what was lost or left behind caravans. There followed a scandal and ‘A’isha’s fidelity was questioned, mostly by hypocrites.

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was sure of the fidelity of his wife. However, since hypocrites made this into a pretext to defame God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, he consulted with some of his Companions like ‘Umar and ‘Ali. ‘Umar said that ‘A’isha was undoubtedly chaste and pure, and that she had been slandered. When asked how he knew, ‘Umar answered:

> – O God’s Messenger! You were once praying. You stopped and explained that the Archangel Gabriel had come and informed you that there was some dirt in your slippers. If there were some impurity in ‘A’isha, your wife, God would certainly have informed you of it.

God’s Messenger, who said, Whoever takes counsel, does not regret in the end, never neglected to consult those who could give informed advice on a particular matter.

2. He also consulted with his Companions before the Battle of Badr, which was the first major encounter between the Muslims and the Makkan polytheists after the Emigration, whether to fight against the Makkan army approaching. The Muslim force numbered 305 or 313, while the Makkans numbered around one thousand.

Miqdad ibn ‘Amr stood up on behalf of the Emigrants and said: ‘Spur your horse forward even to Bark al- Ghimad; we will follow you, with no one left behind.’ When the Messenger turned to the Helpers in order to learn their views, Sa‘d ibn Mu‘adh stood up and said:

> – O God's Messenger! I think you are waiting for the opinion we will give. This is our opinion: Here we are, at your command, with our souls and possessions. Take from our goods whatever amount you wish; and as many people as you desire are ready to sacrifice themselves in your way!

All of his Companions, whether Emigrants or Helpers, promised to follow him in every step he took, and to carry out all of his orders. Despite this, God's Messenger took counsel with them about almost every matter concerning the community as a whole so that doing so should be adopted or appropriated by everyone as a Sunna.

3. Again, in the Battle of Badr, the Muslim army was positioned somewhere on the battlefield. Hubab ibn Mundhir, who was not a leading personality among the Companions, stood up and gave this opinion:

> – O God's Messenger! If you were not ordered by God to be positioned here, let us be positioned around the wells and close up all but one of them in order to prevent the supply of water to the enemy. You set up your camp at the side of that one well (from which we will take water), and we will encircle you.

The Messenger adopted this view.

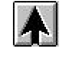
4. In the fifth year of Hijra, the Quraysh made an alliance with certain desert tribes and Jews of the Banu Nadir, who had emigrated from Madina to Khaybar. However, the Prophet, forewarned of their plans, consulted with his Companions about what to do in order to defeat the enemy offensive. Salman al-Farisi gave him the idea that they should dig a defensive trench around Madina, a stratagem hitherto completely unknown among the Arabs.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, adopted the idea and ordered the digging of the trench. This war was therefore called, after the trench, the Battle of the Trench or Ditch.

5. The Muslims found the terms of the Treaty of Hudaybiya unpalatable, and showed some reluctance to perform the Prophet's order to sacrifice the animals they had brought to sacrifice in Makka during the rites which the Treaty prevented them from observing. God's Messenger consulted with his wife Umm Salama about how to respond. She gave this opinion:

> – O God's Messenger! Do not repeat your order lest they should disobey you and perish. Sacrifice your own animals and take off your pilgrim dress (ihram). When they understand the order is decisive, they will perform it unhesitatingly.

God's Messenger acted according to the counsel of his wife.



A Man of Deliberate Action - The Treaty of Hudaybiya

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was a man of action. He never hung back in putting his plans or decisions into action. Any hesitation in the leader causes his followers to falter. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, always acted with deliberation, never neglected to consult, but once he had come to a decision or planned something, he did not show any hesitation in carrying it out.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never repented of what he had, or had not, done, nor regretted any lost opportunity for doing something. Before starting something, he used to take all the necessary precautions, consider all the probabilities, and take counsel with those who could give expert advice on the matter, and once he made up his mind, he never faltered in carrying out his decision. This is one of the important reasons why he carried all his attempts to victory and why his Companions followed him in every step he took.

One of the events worthy of elaboration to understand how God's Messenger solved problems easily is the Treaty of Hudaybiya.

Toward Hudaybiya

In the sixth year of the Hijra, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, informed his Companions that he had had a dream that they would shortly enter the Holy Mosque in Makka in security, with their heads shaved or their hair cut short. This delighted the Companions, particularly the Emigrants, very much. In March of 628, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, set out to perform pilgrimage at Makka with a party of about fifteen hundred men, unarmed and in pilgrim dress (ihram).

Informed of the coming of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the Quraysh armed themselves and the neighboring tribes. They were determined not to allow the Muslims to enter Makka. They dispatched troops of two hundred men under the command of Khalid ibn Walid and Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl, who marched as far as Qura'u l-Ghamim and, seeing that Muslims were coming towards them, returned to Makka in order to inform the Makkans. When the Muslims reached Hudaybiya, a place on the road from Jeddah, about twelve miles from Makka, God's Messenger gave the order to stop.

Halting in Hudaybiya

When the Muslims suffered from shortage of water, God's Messenger threw an arrow down the only well at Hudaybiya. Water began to gush and rose to fill the well. This was a manifest miracle. Everyone drank from that water, did wudu' with it, and filled their bags.

In the face of the Makkans' refusal to allow the Muslims to enter Makka, God's Messenger sent Budayl ibn Warqa, a man from the tribe of Khuda'a, with whom the Muslims were in alliance, to the Quraysh to inform them that they had come with the intention of pilgrimage and therefore bore no arms. The Quraysh listened to Budayl, and reciprocated by sending 'Urwa ibn Mas'ud al-Thaqafi. While talking to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, 'Urwa attempted to take the beard of God's Messenger by way of jesting. However, Mughira ibn Shu'ba struck his hand, saying: 'Do not touch the pure beard of God's Messenger with your impure hand! If you repeat your attempt, I will cut off your hand!'

Mughira was the cousin of 'Urwa and it was hardly two months since he had accepted Islam. Indeed, it was 'Urwa himself who had paid, a few months before, the blood money for a crime Mughira had committed. How Islam had changed Mughira! The commitment of the Companions to their cause and their devotion to God's Messenger shocked 'Urwa, who returned to the Quraysh and said to them:

> – I have visited Chosroes, Caesar and the Negus. None of their subjects are so devoted to their rulers as his Companions are to Muhammad. So, I advise you not to struggle with that man.

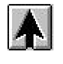
Swearing Allegiance to the Messenger Under a Tree

The Quraysh did not heed the advice of 'Urwa. Nor did they give a warm welcome to Kharash ibn

Umayya, whom God's Messenger sent after 'Urwa. Kharash was followed by 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, who had powerful relatives among the Quraysh. 'Uthman came to negotiate with the Makkans. However, the Makkans imprisoned 'Uthman. When he did not return at the expected time, rumours had it that 'Uthman had been killed. It was then that the Prophet, sitting under a tree, took from his Companions the oath that they would hold together and fight to the death. The Prophet himself represented the absent 'Uthman by proxy in this oath;23 one man, Jadd ibn Qays refrained from taking it, hiding behind a camel. The revelation which came on this occasion reads:

> God was well pleased with the believers when they were swearing allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down peace of reassurance on them and has rewarded them with a near victory. (al-Fath, 48.18)

In that moment of tension, a cloud of dust appeared from afar.



A Peace Treaty Was Signed

The Makkans had sent a delegation headed by Suhayl ibn 'Amr. When God's Messenger learned that the Makkan delegation was headed by Suhayl, he took a good omen from his name, which means easiness, and told his Companions: The situation has eased off.

The Quraysh agreed to a truce, and the Treaty of Hudaybiya was drawn up.

Under the terms of this treaty the Prophet would be allowed to make the pilgrimage, not then, but in the following year. Makka would be emptied for three days for the Muslim pilgrims. The Treaty also stipulated a truce for ten years; that any tribe or person would be free to join either party or make an alliance with it; and that those who were not free but subjects or dependents of the Quraysh and who defected from paganism to Islam would be returned to the Quraysh by the Muslims.

This last condition was not reciprocal. It was objected to in the Muslim camp. It shocked some among them such as 'Umar, who went so far as to question God's Messenger about it. However, it really was of little importance. Muslims, sent back to Makka, were not likely to renounce the blessings of Islam; on the contrary, they would be a focus of influence in Makka for Islam.

The Treaty Proved a Decisive Victory

It was just before the treaty was signed that Abu Jandal, the son of Suhayl, the head of the Makkan delegation, came, trailing his chains, in order to join the Muslims. God's Messenger had to return him to his father in tears. However, he whispered to him: God will shortly save you and those of your like.

Shortly after the Treaty of Hudaybiya was signed, 'Utba ibn Asid, known as Abu Basir, defected to Madina. However, the Quraysh sent two men to demand his return. On their way back to Makka, Abu Basir escaped, killing one of the two men, and wounding the other. God's Messenger did not admit him to Madina, in observing the terms of the Treaty. Abu Basir chose to settle at Iyss, a place on the road from Makka to Syria.

The Muslims held in Makka began to escape and join Abu Basir. The trade route of the Makkans was now under threat. This forced the Quraysh to apply to God's Messenger to annul the relevant term of the treaty and requested him to admit the defecting Makkans to Madina.

The Qur'an called the Treaty of Hudaybiya 'a manifest victory':

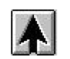
> Surely We have given you a manifest victory. (al-Fath, 48.1)

It proved to be indeed a victory because:

1. By this Treaty, the Quraysh, after many years of unrelenting conflict with Islam, at length recognized Islam as (what they thought) an equal power with themselves. In effect, they had given up their struggle without admitting it to themselves. Having seen the Makkans dealing with the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, as an equal, and as a ruler, a rising tide of converts flowed towards Madina from all quarters of Arabia.

2. There were many among the Quraysh themselves, who would benefit from reflecting on the call of God's Messenger in a peaceful atmosphere. The Treaty of Hudaybiya gave them this opportunity and, as a result, some leading figures of the Quraysh such as Khalid ibn Walid, 'Amr ibn al-'As and 'Uthman ibn Talha, who were famous for their military and political skills, accepted Islam. 'Uthman ibn Talha used to keep the keys of the Ka'ba, and after the conquest of Makka, God's Messenger honoured him with the same task.

3. The Quraysh used to regard the Ka'ba as belonging to themselves exclusively and no one except them was allowed to visit it without paying tribute. By not stipulating that the Muslims must pay tribute for their deferred pilgrimage the following year, the Quraysh unwittingly breached their monopoly of the Ka'ba. This awakened desert tribes to the fact that the Quraysh had no right to claim the exclusive ownership of the Ka'ba.



4. There were at the time in Makka believing Muslims, men and women, and the faith of some of them was unknown to their brothers from Madina. Some of them were employed by God's Messenger as spies. Had a fight taken place in Makka, even though the Muslims had been successful, they might unwittingly have killed some of those Muslims, not known to them as Muslims, and thus suffered the anguish of shedding Muslim blood, and caused either the martyrdom or disclosure of the Prophet's spies. This was prevented by the Treaty. The Qur'an points to this fact:

> It is He who restrained their hands from you, and your hands from them, in the hollow of Makka, after He made you victors over them. God sees the things you do. They are the ones who unbelieved, and banned you from the Holy Mosque, and hindered the sacrificial animals from reaching their place of sacrifice. If it had not been for certain believing men and believing women (in Makka) whom you knew not – lest you should trample them and thus incur guilt for them unknowingly; that God may admit into His Mercy whom He will – (if the believers and unbelievers) had been clearly separated, then We would have chastised the unbelievers among them with a painful chastisement. (al-Fath, 48.24–5)

5. The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, performed the minor pilgrimage the following year. The testimony of faith, declaring that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God, rang out in the valley of Makka. The Quraysh, camped on the Hill of Abu Qubays, heard it, a portent of the coming triumph of Islam. This was, in fact, God's fulfilling of the vision He vouchsafed to His Messenger, as pointed out in the Qur'an:

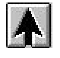
> God has indeed fulfilled the vision He vouchsafed to His Messenger truly: You shall enter the Holy Mosque, if God wills, in security, your heads shaved, your hair cut short, not fearing. He knew what you knew not, and, granted, besides this, a nigh victory. (al-Fath, 48.27)

6. The Treaty of Hudaybiya freed God's Messenger to deal with others. In the expeditions which

followed the Treaty, the Muslims conquered the redoubtable citadels of the Jews of Khaybar, giving the Jews the choice of entering Islam or accepting the rule of Islam by paying a tribute in lieu of protection (jizya), thereby impressing their neighbours and the Arabs of the Peninsula with the growing strength of the Islamic state.

The Muslims faithfully observed the terms of the Treaty. But the Makkans later on broke the terms in the attack which one of their allied tribes (the Banu Bakr) made on the Banu Khuda'a (who were in alliance with the Prophet). So, in January 630, two years after the Treaty of Hudaybiya, at the head of an army of 10,000, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, marched upon Makka and conquered it, meeting almost no resistance. The Ka'ba was purified of idols and in the course of the following days, the Makkans accepted Islam. This was due to happen because,

> It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may uplift it above every religion. God suffices as a witness. Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those who are with him are hard against the unbelievers, merciful to one another. You see them bowing, prostrating, seeking grace from God and (His) good pleasure. Their mark is on their faces, the trace of prostration. That is their likeness in the Torah, and their likeliness in the Gospel: as a seed that puts forth its shoot, and strengthens it, and it grows stout and rises straight upon its stalk, pleasing the sowers, that through them He may enrage the unbelievers. God has promised those of them who believe and do deeds of righteousness forgiveness and a mighty wage. (al-Fath, 48.28–9)



Solution to the Problem of Racism

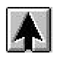
Racism is one of the severest diseases of human society in this age. Everyone remembers how black Africans were transported across the oceans, packed in specially designed ships, thought of and treated exactly like livestock. They were all made slaves, forced to change their names and religion and language, were never entitled to hope for true freedom, and were refused the least of human rights. Because among Western peoples the attitude to non-Westerners has changed very little in modern times, the political and social condition of the black people remains, even where they live amid the native Westerners – Americans or Europeans – as theoretically equal fellow-citizens, that of despised inferiors.

When God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was raised as a Prophet, the same kind of racism, under the name of tribalism, was prevalent in Makka. The Quraysh considered themselves in particular, and Arabs in general, superior to all the other peoples of the world. God's Messenger came with the Divine Message and proclaimed that no Arab is superior over a non-Arab, and no white is superior over black, and superiority is by righteousness and God-fearing alone (al-Hujurat, 49.13). He also declared that even if an Abyssinian black Muslim were to rule over Muslims, he should be obeyed.

God's Messenger eradicated the problem of racial or color discrimination so successfully that, for example, 'Umar once said of Bilal: 'Bilal is our master, and was emancipated by our master Abu Bakr.'28 Zayd ibn Haritha was a black slave. God's Messenger emancipated him and, before the banning of adoption by the Qur'an, adopted him. He married him to Zaynab bint Jahsh, one of the noblest women of the Muslim community. After all these honours he conferred on him, he also appointed him as a commander over the Muslim army he sent against the Byzantine Empire and which included the leading figures of the Companions such as Abu Bakr, 'Umar and others. The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, appointed Zayd's son, Usama, to command the army he formed just before his passing away.

During his Caliphate, 'Umar paid a higher salary to Usama than to his own son, 'Abdullah, who asked why. 'Umar answered: 'My son, I do so, because I know well that God's Messenger loved Usama's father more than yours and Usama himself more than you'.

Zayd ibn Haritha commanded an army in which the noblest of the Quraysh, like Ja'far ibn Abu Talib, the cousin of God's Messenger, and Khalid ibn Walid, the invincible general of the age, were present. The army commanded by Usama, Zayd's son, included leading figures among the Companions such as Khalid, Abu 'Ubayda, Talha, Zubayr and others. This established in the hearts and minds that superiority is not by birth or color or blood, but by God-fearing and righteousness.



The Last Word on the Leadership of the Prophet

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, had all the qualities a leader is supposed to have. He was a leader not only in one aspect of life but he led his community to success in every field. There is none in human history comparable to him as commander, statesman, religious leader, spiritual guide, etc. In order to know him as a leader more closely, we had better summarize the qualities a leader should have in general terms:

1. A leader should be realistic; his messages and demands should not be in contradiction with the realities of life. He should consider the conditions surrounding him and his community as they actually are. He should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages he has.

2. A leader should be convinced of the truth of the message he conveys to people. He should never falter in his convictions and be resolute in conveying his message without renunciation.

3. A leader should be courageous in nature. Even left alone to himself, he should find in himself as much courage as to resist all the difficulties he might encounter.

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, was the most courageous of people. When some of his pursuers reached the mouth of the cave where he was in hiding, Abu Bakr was afraid that something would happen to the Messenger. However, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, comforted him, saying: Grieve not, for God is with us.

4. A leader should have a strong will-power and resolve and never fall into hopelessness.

5. A leader should be aware of his responsibility and nothing should be able to prevent him from fulfilling it. Especially the charms of the world and attractions of life should not be able to intervene between him and his responsibility.

6. A leader should be far-sighted and have determined his goal well. He should have the mental capacity to discern the developments he might encounter in the future. He should also be able to evaluate the past, the present and the future together and reach new syntheses. A leader who frequently changes opinions causes rifts and disagreements among his community.

7. A leader should know the members of his community individually. He should have discovered each of them with their dispositions, character, abilities, shortcomings, ambitions and weak points. This will enable him particularly to make the best choice in his appointments to important offices.

8. A leader should have a strong character and be equipped with praiseworthy virtues. He should be

determined in carrying out his decisions but capable of flexibility; he should know when to be unyielding and implacable; when to be relenting and compassionate. He should be earnest and dignified but also modest. He should be upright, truthful, trustworthy, and just.

9. A leader should not cherish worldly ambitions and abuse his authority. He should live like one who is the poorest of his community and never discriminate among his subjects. He should love all of them, prefer them over himself and be able to make himself loved by them sincerely. He should be faithful to his community and be able to secure their loyalty and devotion.

Considered from the viewpoint of all these and many other qualities a leader should have, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, will be seen to be the greatest leader history has ever known. To cite only a few examples, even when the conditions were most unfavourable, he never conceived of giving up conveying his Message nor yielded to the desires of his opponents to make concessions. Instead, he used to say to them: Say, 'There is no god but God', and prosper in both worlds. When his Companions complained to him about the harsh conditions afflicting them in Makka and the persecutions they suffered, he answered: You show haste. One day will come and a woman will travel from Hira [a town in southern Iraq] to Makka alone on her camel (in security) and turn round Ka'ba as an act of worship, and the treasuries of the Sassanid Emperor will be captured by my community.

Once the polytheist leaders of Makka came to him and said: 'If you assign us a day when others, especially those poor ones, will not be present, we may talk to you about accepting your religion.' They despised the poor Muslims like Bilal, 'Ammar and Habbab, and desired special treatment. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never accepted such proposals, nor did he ever think of accepting them. The verses revealed addressed him as follows:

> Send not away those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His 'Face'. (al-An'am, 6.52)
>
> Persevere together with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His 'Face'. (al-Kahf, 18.28)



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

THE PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATIONS OF GOD'S MESSENGER

THE PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATIONS OF GOD'S MESSENGER

God's Messenger prayed to God at every step he took. When we look through the books of Tradition (Hadith), we see that he never neglected prayer in any situation. Prayer is, as mentioned before, a mystery of servanthood to God, and God's Messenger is the foremost in servanthood, so far so that in the declaration of faith — I bear witness there is no god but God; I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger — first we declare that he is a servant and then a Messenger. Whatever he intended to do, he referred it to God through prayer.

God is 'the Creator of us and whatever we do'. Although we should take necessary precautions and follow precedents in order to accomplish things in this material world, where the principle of 'cause and effect' has a special place, we should never forget that everything ultimately depends on God to come into existence. So, action and prayer should be combined in everything we do. This is also what is required by our belief in the Unity of God.

As with every virtue, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was the foremost in the knowledge of God, and therefore in love of, and paradoxically, fear of Him. He was perfectly conscious that everything, from the smallest to the greatest, depends on God Almighty for its existence and subsistence. Whatever God wills, happens: When He wills a thing, His command is to say to it 'Be', and it is (Ya Sin, 36.82). God has made the existence of things and the operation of the universe dependant upon 'laws' and the fulfillment of prerequisites. Fully aware of this fact, God's Messenger never failed to do what he had to do, and then, combining action with prayer, left the result to God with absolute confidence in Him. The supplications he made have been transmitted to us. When we read them, we see that they contain deep meaning and accord exactly with the circumstances he made them in. They reflect profound belief, deep sincerity, absolute submission and complete confidence.

For example, he advises us:

The prayer to say on going to bed

When you go to bed, do wudu' as you do before daily prayers and say this prayer:

> O God! I have, in hope (of Your Mercy) and fear (of Your wrath), submitted myself to You, referred my affairs to You, and taken refuge in You. There is no refuge, nor source of safety from Your wrath, except You. I have believed in the Book You sent down, and the Prophet you raised.

Without sins, a soul is like a polished mirror or a white piece of cloth. Sins are dirt covering the soul. In order to clean the soul of dirt, that is, in order to purify it of sins, one should turn to God in repentance and ask for His forgiveness. The following is one of the prayers which the Prophet said in order to ask for God's forgiveness, although he himself was sinless, and advised us to say:

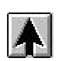
The prayer to say to ask God's forgiveness

> O God! Put between me and errors a distance as great as that which you put between east and

> west! O God! Clean me of my errors as a white garment is cleaned of dirt!

The words used and the comparisons made in this prayer are so meaningful that their explanation may fill a whole volume.

The following are some more examples of his supplications, as precise and comprehensive as the others:



Supplications comprehensive in meaning

> O God! I ask You for the whole of good, including what is at hand and what is deferred; what I already know and what I do not know. I take refuge in You from every evil, including what is at hand and what is deferred; what I already know and what I do not know.

> O God! There is nothing to hinder what You will grant, nor anything to grant what You hinder! No wealthy one can do us good, as wealth belongs to You.

> O God! I have not told everything, nor have I taken an oath, nor have I made a vow, nor have I done anything, which You did not previously will. Whatever You willed, it is, and whatever You did not will, it is not. There is no strength nor power save with You, and You are indeed All-Powerful over everything. O God! Whatever prayer I have said, let it be for whomever You have mercy for, and whatever curse I have called down, let it be for whomever You have called down curses upon. Surely You are my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die as a Muslim and include me among the righteous.

> O God! I ask You for content after misfortune, a peaceful life after death, the pleasure of observing Your Face, and a desire to meet You. I take refuge in You from wronging others and from being wronged, from showing animosity and being subject to animosity, and from erring or committing unforgivable sins.

> ...If You leave me to myself, then you have left me to weakness, neediness, sinfulness and erring. I do not depend but on Your Mercy, so forgive all of my sins, for none but You can forgive sins; accept my repentance, for You are the Oft-Relenting and the All-Compassionate.

> O God! You deserve most to be mentioned and none but You deserve to be worshipped. You are more helpful than anyone whose help may be sought, and more affectionate than every ruler, more generous than anyone who may be asked for something, and more generous than anyone else who gives. You are the Monarch, having no partners, and the Unique One having no like. Everything is perishable except You. You are never obeyed but by Your leave, and never disobeyed but within Your knowledge. When somebody obeys You, You reward him; but when someone disobeys You, You forgive him. You witness everything, nearer to it than any other witness; and protect everything, nearer to it than any other protector. You ordained the acts of men and determined their time of death. You know what is in every mind, and secrets are manifest to You. The lawful is what You have made lawful, and the forbidden is what You have forbidden. The religion is what You have laid down, and the commandment is what You have decreed. The creation is Your creation, and the servants are Your servants. You are God, the All-Clement, the All-Compassionate, I ask You, for the sake of the light of Your Face, by which the heavens and earth were illuminated, and for the sake of every right belonging to You, and for the sake of those who ask of You, to forgive me just in this morning and just in this evening, and to protect me, by Your Power, from Hellfire.

> O God! I seek refuge in You from any knowledge which gives no benefit, and from a heart that fears You not, and from a soul not satisfied, and from prayer that cannot be answered.
>
> O God! I ask You for steadfastness in my affairs; I ask you for resolution in guidance; I ask You for gratitude for Your bounties and acceptable service to You; I ask You for a truthful tongue and a sound heart; and I seek refuge in You from the evil of what You know, and I ask You for the good of what You know, and I ask for Your forgiveness for what You already know. Surely You are the Knower of the Unseen.
>
> O God! I ask You to enable me to do good and refrain from vices, and to love the poor, and to forgive me and have mercy on me, and, when You will people's deviation and dissentions and disorder in public life, make me die before taking part in that disorder. I also ask You for Your love and the love of whom You love, and the love of the acts which will make me nearer to Your love.
>
> O God! I ask You for the good in the beginning and in the end, and in its most comprehensive form with its beginning and result, and its manifest and secret kinds, and for the highest rank in Paradise.
>
> O God! Help me remember You, thank You, and worship You most properly.
>
> O God! I ask You for guidance, fear of You, chastity and independence of others.
>
> O God! Bring all of our affairs to a good conclusion, and protect us from disgrace and ignominy in the world and from being tormented in the Hereafter!

The Prophet teaches us another comprehensive supplication:

> O God! We ask You for the whole of good for which Your Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, asked You, and we seek refuge in You from every evil from which Your Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, sought refuge in You.

Prayer constituted an important aspect of the Prophet's life. All the supplications quoted, together with many others which he said before going to bed, after waking up, while getting dressed or undressed, on seeing the new moon or witnessing a lunar or solar eclipse, when a storm broke up or a cloud appeared, before starting on or returning from a journey, and in times of drought or heavy rain, etc., have all become keys in the hands of the great saints like Abu Hasan al-Shadhili, Ahmad Badawi, Ahmad Rifa'i and 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, to knock on the door of God's Mercy. This shows that he is the foremost in prayer, and that he is the greatest of the Prophets.

PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT II

THE PROPHET OF UNIVERSAL MERCY

THE PROPHET OF UNIVERSAL MERCY

The beginning of existence was an act of mercy and compassion Without mercy the universe would be in chaos. Everything has come into existence through compassion and by compassion it continues to exist in harmony.

Muslim sages say: 'The universe is the breath of the All-Compassionate One'. That is, the universe was created as a manifestation of God's Name, the All-Compassionate. Its subsistence depends on the same Name. This Name manifests itself, first of all, as the All-Provider so as to secure the subsistence or survival of living creatures through food or nourishment. Besides, life is the foremost and most manifest blessing of God Almighty, and the true and everlasting life is the life of the Hereafter. Since man can deserve this life by acting in a way to please God, God sent Prophets and revealed Scriptures out of His compassion for mankind. For this reason, while mentioning His blessings upon mankind in the sura al-Rahman (the All-Merciful) in the Qur'an, He begins:

> Al-Rahman (the All-Merciful). He taught the Qur'an. He created man. He taught him speech. (al-Rahman, 55.1-4)

All aspects of this life are a rehearsal for the afterlife and every creature is engaged in action to this end. In every effort order is evident and in every achievement compassion resides. Some 'natural' events or social convulsions in the human order which seem to man disagreeable at first sight should not be regarded as incompatible with compassion. They are like dark clouds or lightning and thunder, which, although frightening for man, bring us good tidings of rain. Thus, the whole universe, from minutest particles to gigantic galaxies, sings the praises of the All-Compassionate.

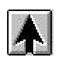
Muhammad (pbuh) is the embodiment of Divine mercy

The universe is, in the language of Muslim sages, God's 'created book' issued from His Attribute of Will. To write a book which no one could understand would be an exertion in vain and God is absolutely beyond such futility. So, He created Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, one who would instruct people in the meaning of the universe. Second, He taught man His Commandments through Muhammad in the Qur'an. Only by acting in accordance with these Commandments can man gain an eternal life of happiness. The Qur'an is the ultimate and most comprehensive form of Divine Revelation, Islam is the last, perfected and universal form of Divine Religions, and the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is the embodiment of Divine Compassion, one whom God sent not save as a mercy for all the worlds.

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is like a spring of pure water in the heart

of a desert, or like a source of light in the darkness enveloping the universe. Whoever appeals to this spring can take as much water as to quench his thirst and is purified of all his dirt or pollution, spiritual or intellectual, and illumined with the light of belief.

Mercy was a like a magical key in the hands of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. He opened with this key the doors of the hearts so hardened and rusty as one thought it was impossible to open them, and lighted a torch of belief in them.



Islam is the religion of universal mercy

God's Messenger preached Islam, the religion of universal mercy. Despite this, some so-called 'champions of humanism' accuse Islam of being 'a religion of the sword'. However, this is a sheer deception. They seem to wail over an animal killed in some part of the world or raise their voices whenever one from them is harmed, but they do not bat an eyelid when Muslims are massacred. Their world is built on personal interest. It should be pointed out that the abuse of the feeling of compassion is as harmful and sometimes more harmful than being devoid of compassion altogether.

The amputation of a gangrenous limb is an act of compassion to the rest of the whole body. Likewise, oxygen and hydrogen, mixed in the proper ratios, form one of the most vital of substances. However, when this ratio changes, each element resumes its original combustible identity. It is likewise of great importance to apportion the amount of compassion and to identify who deserves it. 'Compassion for a wolf sharpens its appetite, and not being content with what it receives, it demands even more.' Compassion for a rebel makes him more aggressive, encouraging him to offend against others. Compassion rather requires that one should be prevented from doing wrong. God's Messenger says: Help your brother whether he be just or unjust. The Companions asked: 'How shall we help our unjust brother?' He replied: You help him by preventing him from doing injustice. So, compassion also requires that those who take pleasure in poisoning like a snake should either be deprived of their poison or prevented from poisoning. Or else, the administration of the world will be left to 'cobras'.

The compassion of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, encompasses every creature. Indeed, he was also an invincible commander and an able statesman. He knew that to leave the world to blood-stained, blood-thirsty people would be tyranny of the most terrible kind to all the oppressed and wronged people. His compassion therefore required that lambs should be able to live in the utmost security against the attacks of wolves. He desired, of course, the guidance of everyone. This was his greatest concern, as stated in the Qur'an:

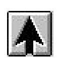
> Yet it may be, if they believe not in this Message, you will consume yourself, following after them, with grief. (al-Kahf, 18.6)

But what could he do for those who persisted in unbelief and actually waged war against him in order to destroy him and his Message? He had to fight against his enemies out of his universal compassion that encompasses every creature. It was because of this compassion that when he was severely wounded in the battle of Uhud, he held his hands open towards God and prayed: O God, forgive my people, for they do not know.

In Makka, his people inflicted on him every kind of suffering eventually forcing him to emigrate to Madina, and then waged on him war for five years. However, when he conquered Makka without bloodshed in the twenty-first year of his Prophethood, he asked the Makkan unbelievers, awaiting his decision about them: How do you expect me to treat you? They responded unanimously: 'You are a noble one, the son of a noble one.' He announced to them his decision:

> You may go away! No reproach this day shall be on you; may God forgive you. He is the Most Compassionate of the Compassionate.

The same announcement was made by Sultan Mehmed, the Conqueror, to the defeated Byzantines, when he conquered Istanbul, eight and a quarter centuries later. Such is the universal compassion of Islam.



The Messenger's compassion towards the believers

The Messenger's compassion towards the believers was of the utmost degree. The Qur'an describes his compassion in the following verse:

> There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves; grievous to him is your suffering; anxious is he over you, full of concern for you, for the believers full of pity, compassionate. (al-Tawba, 9.128)

He lowered unto believers his wing of tenderness through mercy (al-Hijr, 15.88), and was the 'guardian' of believers and nearer to them than their selves (al-Ahzab, 33.6). When one of his Companions died, he asked those present at the funeral whether that Companion had left any unpaid debt. On learning that he had left a debt, he mentioned the above quoted verse and announced:

I am his guardian. Let the creditors appeal to me to collect their debt.

Even unbelievers benefit from Islam as a religion of mercy

The compassion of God's Messenger even encompassed hypocrites and unbelievers. Although he recognized the hypocrites of his time, he never disclosed them so that they could enjoy the rights of full citizenship to which their outward confession of faith and practice entitled them. Since they lived among Muslims, their unbelief in eternal life after death may have been reduced or changed to doubt, and therefore their fear of death and the pain caused by the assertion of eternal non-existence after death might have been diminished. As for unbelievers, God removed the collective destruction from them. He had eradicated many peoples before. God says:

> But God would never chastise them while you were among them; God would never chastise them as they begged forgiveness. (al-Anfal, 8.33)

This verse refers not only to the unbelievers in the time of God's Messenger, but also to all those coming later. God will not destroy peoples altogether so long as people who follow the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, continue to live in the world. Besides, He has left 'the door of repentance' open until the Last Day. Anyone can accept Islam or beg God's forgiveness, however sinful he is. For this reason, a Muslim's enmity towards unbelievers is, in fact, in the form of pitying them. When 'Umar, the second Caliph, saw a priest of eighty years, he sat down and sobbed. When asked why he was sobbing, he replied: 'God assigned him so long a life span, but he has not been able to find the true path.'

The Messenger sent as a mercy for all creation

'Umar was the disciple of God's Messenger, who said:

I was not sent as one to call down curses on people, but I was sent as a mercy.

He also said:

> I am Muhammad, and Ahmad (praised one), and Muqaffi (the Last Prophet); and I am also Hashir (the final Prophet in the presence of whom the dead will be resurrected); and the Prophet of repentance (the Prophet for the cause of whom 'the door' of repentance will always remain open), and the Prophet of mercy.

The archangel Gabriel also benefited from the mercy of the Qur'an, which was revealed to God's Messenger. Once he asked Gabriel whether he had any share in the mercy contained in the Qur'an. Gabriel answered, 'Yes, O God's Messenger,' and explained,

> I had not been certain about my end. However, when the verse (One) obeyed, and moreover, trustworthy and secured (al-Takwir, 81.21) was revealed, I felt secure about my end.

When Ma'iz was punished for fornication, one of the Companions reproached him saying: 'He disclosed the sin he had committed secretly and died like a dog.' God's Messenger frowned at him and said:

> You have backbitten your friend. His repentance and asking God's pardon for his sin would be enough for the forgiveness for all the sinners in the world.



The Messenger's compassion toward children and his friends

God's Messenger was particularly compassionate towards children. When he saw a child crying, he sat beside him or her and shared his or her feelings. He felt the pain of a mother for her child more than the mother herself. Once he said:

> I stand in prayer and wish to prolong it. However, I hear the cry of a child and cut the prayer short for the anxiety which the mother is feeling.

He took children in his arms and hugged them. He was once hugging his beloved grandsons, Hasan and Hussayn, when Aqra ibn Habis told him: 'I have got ten children. So far, I haven't kissed any of them.'

God's Messenger responded:

The one with no pity for others is not pitied.

According to another version, he said:

What can I do for you if God has removed from you the feeling of compassion?

Once, he said:

Take pity on those on earth so that those in the heavens should have pity on you.

Sa'd ibn 'Ubada once became ill. God's Messenger visited him in his house and, on seeing his faithful Companion in a pitiful state, he was moved to tears. Then, he said:

> God does not punish because of tears, nor because of grief, but he punishes because of this, and he pointed to his tongue.

When 'Uthman ibn Mad'un died, he wept profusely. During the funeral, a woman remarked: ' 'Uthman flew, like a bird, to Paradise.' Even in that mournful state, the Prophet did not lose his balance and corrected the woman:

> How do you know that he went to Paradise while even I do not know, and I am a Prophet?

Protector of the weak and oppressed

A member of the clan of Banu Muqarrin beat his maidservant. The poor woman referred the matter to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who sent for the master and said to him: You have beaten her without any justifiable right. So, set her free. Setting a slave free was far better for his or her master than being punished in the Hereafter because of the slave.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, always protected and supported, both prior to and during his Prophethood, widows, orphans, the poor and disabled. When he returned home in excitement from Mount Hira after the first Revelation, his wife, Khadija, told him:

> – I hope you will be the Prophet of this Ummah, you always tell the truth, fulfil the trust, support your relatives, help the poor and weak, and feed guests.

The Messenger's compassion also encompassed animals

His compassion encompassed not only human beings, but also animals. We hear from him:

A prostitute was guided to truth by God and ultimately went to Paradise because she gave water to a poor dog dying of thirst, whilst another woman was condemned to the torments of Hell because she left a cat to die of hunger.

Once on return from a military campaign, a few Companions took away the chicks of a bird from their nest to stroke them. The mother bird came back and, when it could not find its chicks in the nest, it began to fly around screeching. When informed of the matter, God's Messenger became angry and ordered the chicks to be put back in the nest.

Once he told his Companions that one of the previous Prophets was reproached by God because he set on fire a nest of ants.

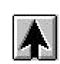
He was in Mina when some of his Companions once attacked a snake to kill it. However, the snake managed to escape. Watching this from afar, God's Messenger remarked: It was saved from your evil, as you were from its.

As reported by Ibn 'Abbas, when God's Messenger once saw a man sharpening his knife directly before the sheep he would slaughter, he said to him: Do you desire to kill it many times?

'Abdullah ibn Ja'far narrates:

> God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, once went to a garden in Madina with a few of his Companions. There was a very scrawny camel in a corner. On seeing God's Messenger, it began to shed tears. The Messenger went to the camel and, after staying beside it for some time, severely warned the owner to feed the camel properly.

The love and compassion of God's Messenger for all kinds of creatures was not of the kind claimed by today's 'humanists'. He was sincere and balanced in his love and compassion. He was more compassionate than any other person. He was a Prophet raised by God, the Creator and Sustainer of all beings, for the guidance and happiness of conscious beings – mankind and jinn – and the harmony of existence. So, he lived not for himself but for others; he is a mercy for all the worlds.



THE MILDNESS AND FORBEARANCE OF GOD'S MESSENGER

THE MILDNESS AND FORBEARANCE OF GOD'S MESSENGER

Mildness is another dimension of the character of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. He was a bright mirror in which God reflected His Mercy.

Mildness is a reflection of compassion. God made His Messenger mild and gentle, not harsh and stern. Due to his mildness, God's Messenger gained many converts to Islam and surpassed numerous obstacles on his way to ultimate victory.

After the victory of Badr, the Battle of Uhud was a severe trial for the Muslim community in Madina. Although God's Messenger was of the opinion that they should face the enemy on the outskirts of Madina, the majority of the Muslim army urged him to go out into the open for a pitched battle. When the two armies met each other at the foot of Mount Uhud, God's Messenger positioned fifty archers in the pass of 'Aynayn and ordered them not to leave their place without permission, even if they saw that the Muslims had won the victory decisively.

The Messenger's lenience and gentleness in Uhud

The Muslim army, one third of the enemy in number and equipment, had almost defeated the Makkan polytheists at the beginning of the battle. Seeing the enemy fleeing the battlefield, the archers forgot the Prophet's command and left their positions in pursuit of them. However, Khalid ibn Walid, the cavalry commander of the Makkan army, saw this and, riding round the mountain, attacked the Muslim army from behind. The fleeing enemy soldiers turned back, and as a result, the Muslims, caught in the cross-fire, experienced a reverse. More than seventy Muslims were martyred and God's Messenger was wounded. He might have reproached those who urged him to come into the open for a pitched battle and the archers who left their place contrary to his orders. But he did the reverse and showed leniency to them. The Qur'an says:

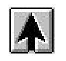
> It was by the mercy of God that you were gentle to them; if you had been harsh and hard of heart, they would have dispersed from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them in the affair. And when you are resolved, then put your trust in God; surely God loves those who put their trust (in Him). (Al 'Imran, 3.159)

This verse shows, besides the need for leaders to be mild and lenient to those who make well-intentioned mistakes, the importance which Islam attaches to consultation in public administration.

Mild, imploring, clement and penitent

The mildness and forgiveness of God's Messenger was a reflection of God's Names, the All-Mild, the All-Clement and the All-Forgiving. God does not stop providing for people despite their rebellion or unbelief. While the vast majority of people disobey Him either in unbelief and explicit or implicit association of partners with Him or transgression of His Commandments, the sun continues to send them its heat and light, clouds come to their aid with their tears — rain — and the earth never stops feeding them with its various fruits and plants. This is because of the Clemency and Forgiveness of God Almighty, which God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, reflected through his compassion, mildness and forgiveness.

Like the Prophet Abraham, whom he used to say that he resembled, God's Messenger was mild, imploring, clement and penitent (Hud, 11.75), and also gentle to believers and full of pity and compassionate for them (al-Tawba, 9.127). Abraham, upon him be peace, was never angry with people, however much they tormented him. He wished for good even for his enemies. He implored God and shed tears in His Presence. Since he was a man of peace and salvation, God made the fire into which he was thrown cool and safe for him (al-Anbiya', 21.69). Like him, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was never angry with anybody because of what was done to him. When his wife 'A'isha, may God be pleased with her, was made the object of a slander, he did not think to punish the slanderers even after 'A'isha was cleared by the Qur'an. Bedouins often came to his presence and behaved impolitely, but he did not even frown at them. Although extremely sensitive, he always showed forbearance towards everybody, whether friend or foe. His sensitivity was such that if, for example, a needle pierced his finger, it would give him more pain than others feel when speared. Despite this, he tolerated all the impudence of people.



His forgiveness after the Battles of Hunayn and Khaybar

As recounted earlier, he shared out the spoils of war after the Battle of Hunayn, when a man named Dhu l-Huwaysira objected, saying: 'Be just, o Muhammad!' This was an unforgivable offence against the sacred character of a Prophet whose role was to establish justice in the world. Unable to endure such offences against God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, 'Umar reacted: 'Let me kill this hypocrite, o God's Messenger!' But the Messenger did nothing other than say:

> Who else will show justice if I am not just? If I do not show justice, then I have been lost and brought to naught.

According to another version, he said:

> If I am not just, then, by following me, you – the people – have been lost and brought to naught.

In addition, he implied that that man would later take part in a seditious movement, which came true during the Caliphate of 'Ali. Dhu l-Huwaysira was found dead among the Kharijites killed in the Battle of Nahrawan.

As related by Anas ibn Malik, a Jewish woman offered a roasted sheep to God's Messenger after the conquest of Khaybar. Just before he took the first morsel to his mouth, God's Messenger stopped and told the others at the meal not to eat of it, saying: This sheep tells me that it is poisonous. Nevertheless, a Companion, named Bishr, died immediately after he took the first morsel. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, sent for the woman and questioned her on why she tried to poison him. The woman replied:

> – If you are really a Prophet, the poison will not affect you. If you are not, I wanted to save people from your evil.

God’s Messenger forgave the woman for her conspiracy to kill him.

The Messenger’s mildness toward all kinds of impertinence

While the Prophet was once returning to his house after talking to his Companions in the mosque, a Bedouin pulled him by the collar and said rudely: ‘O Muhammad! Give me my due! Load up these two camels of mine. For you will load them up with neither your own wealth nor the wealth of your father.’ To this impertinence, God’s Messenger gave the response, without showing any sign of offence: Give that man what he wants!

Zayd ibn San’an narrates:

> Once, God’s Messenger borrowed some money from me. I was not yet a Muslim then. I went to him to collect my debt before its due time, and insulted him, saying; ‘You the children of ‘Abd al-Muttalib, are very reluctant to pay your debts!’ ‘Umar became very angry with this insult of mine and shouted; ‘O enemy of God! Were it not for the treaty between us and the Jewish community, I would cut off your head! Speak to God’s Messenger politely!’

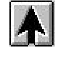
However, God’s Messenger smiled at me and, turning to ‘Umar, said;

> – ‘Umar, pay the man his debt! And add to it the amount of twenty gallons because you have frightened him!

‘Umar relates the rest of the story:

> ‘We went together. On the way, Zayd spoke to me unexpectedly;
>
> – O ‘Umar! You got angry with me. But I have found in him all the features of the Last Prophet recorded in the Torah, the Old Testament. However, there is this verse in it: ‘His mildness surpasses his anger. The severity of impudence to him increases him only in mildness and forbearance.’ In order to test his forbearance, I uttered what I uttered. Now I am convinced that he is the Prophet whose coming the Torah predicted, so, I believe and bear witness that he is the Last Prophet.

The mildness and forbearance of God’s Messenger sufficed for the conversion of Zayd ibn San’an, who was one of the Jewish scholars of the time.



Making the religion easy to practice

God’s Messenger himself was extremely meticulous in practicing the religion. Nobody could imitate him in performing supererogatory prayers. Despite being sinless, he spent more than half the night praying in tears, and sometimes fasted two or three days successively. Every moment, he took a further step towards the ‘praised station’ set for him by God. However, he was very tolerant towards others; in order that his Umma should not be put under a heavy burden, he did not perform the supererogatory prayers in the mosque. When a complaint was circulated about an imam (prayer leader) because he prolonged the prayer, the Prophet climbed the pulpit and said:

O you people! You cause aversion in people from prayer. Whoever among you leads a prescribed prayer should not prolong it, for there are among you people who are sick or old or who are in urgent

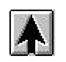
need.

Once his congregation complained to God's Messenger about Mu'adh ibn Jabal that he prolonged the night prayer. His love for Mu'adh did not prevent the Messenger from reproaching him, saying, Are you a trouble-maker? Are you a troublemaker? Are you a trouble-maker?

Mildness and forbearance conquering hearts

The mildness and forbearance of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, captured the hearts and preserved the unity of the Muslims. As stated in the Qur'an, if he had been harsh and hard-hearted, people would have dispersed from about him. But those who saw him and listened to him were endowed with Divine manifestations to the extent that they attained the rank of sainthood. For example, Khalid ibn Walid was the general of the Quraysh who caused the Muslims to experience a reverse in the Battle of Uhud. However, when he was not included in the army that went out for a military campaign on the day following his conversion, he was upset and sobbed.

Like Khalid, Ikrima and 'Amr ibn al-'As were among those who did great harm to God's Messenger and the Muslims. When they believed, each became a sword of Islam drawn against unbelievers. Ibn Hisham, the brother of Abu Jahl, converted to Islam shortly before the death of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. He became so sincere a Muslim that just before his martyrdom at the Battle of Yarmuk two years after the death of God's Messenger, he did not drink the water that Hudayfa al-'Adawi offered him, asking him to take it to the one lying nearby groaning for water. He died, having preferred his Muslim brother over himself.



The unparalleled greatness of the Messenger's pupils

Those people attained high ranks in the enlightening atmosphere of God's Messenger, upon him peace and blessings. They were included among the Companions, those regarded and respected as the most virtuous people after the Prophets by almost the whole body of the Muslim Umma since the earliest days of Islam. In order to explain their greatness, Said Nursi, the great Muslim revivalist of the twentieth century, says:

> I had been wondering why even the greatest of saints like Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi are unable to attain the rank of the Companions. One day God Almighty enabled me to perform in prayer a prostration, which I have succeeded in doing only once during my life. I concluded that it is impossible to attain the ranks of the Companions because all the prostrations of the Companions were like that in meaning and merit.

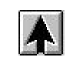
It was God's Messenger who brought up the Companions. It is enough to establish the greatness of the Companions that they succeeded despite their small number in conveying Islam to the farthest areas of Asia and Africa within a few decades, and Islam was rooted in those areas so deeply that, despite the concerted efforts of the global enemy powers for centuries backed with all kinds of machinery and technological facilities, to remove it from the surface of the earth, it continues to gain new momentum every passing day and is the sole alternative for the future salvation of humankind. The Companions, may God be pleased with them all, developed from the wretched state of the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance to being guides and teachers of a considerable part of mankind until the Last Day, and the vanguard of the most magnificent civilization of history.

The Messenger absolutely balanced in all his actions

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was a man of absolute balance. His universal compassion did not prevent him from executing Divine justice, and his mildness and forbearance did not go to extremes of overlooking any breach of Islamic rules or self-humiliation. For example, in a military campaign, Usama ibn Zayd threw an enemy soldier to the ground. When he was about to kill him, the man confessed belief. However, judging that confession to be due to fear of death, Usama killed the man. When informed of the incident, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, became so angry with Usama that he reprimanded him severely, saying: Did you cleave his heart open and see (whether his confession of belief was due to fear of death)? He repeated this so many times that Usama said later: 'I wished I had not yet become a Muslim on the day I was scolded so severely.'

Likewise, one day, Abu Dharr got angry with Bilal and insulted him, saying: 'You, the son of a black woman!' Bilal came to God's Messenger and reported the incident in tears. The Messenger reproached Abu Dharr, saying: Do you still have a sign of Jahiliyya? Repentant of what he did, Abu Dharr lay on the ground and said: 'The head of Abu Dharr will not be raised (meaning he will not get up) unless Bilal put his foot on it to pass over it.' Bilal forgave him and they were reconciled.

Such was the brotherhood and the humanity Islam created between once savage people.



THE GENEROSITY OF GOD'S MESSENGER

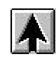
God's Messenger is, in the whole of creation, the most polished mirror, in which God Almighty's Names and Attributes are reflected to the highest degree. Being a perfect manifestation of God's Names and Attributes and an embodiment of the Qur'an and Islam, he is the greatest and most decisive and comprehensive proof of God's Existence and Unity and the truth of Islam and the Qur'an. One who saw him remembered God automatically. Each virtue he had was the reflection of a Name or Attribute of God, and is a proof of his Prophethood. Like his mildness and forbearance, his generosity is also another dimension of his excellent, matchless personality and a reflection and proof of his Prophethood.

The people of Arabia were renowned for their generosity even in the pre-Islamic period of Ignorance. When we look at their poetry belonging to that time, we see that they were proud of their generosity. However, their generosity was not for the sake of God or for an altruistic motive; rather, it was the cause of self-pride. But the generosity of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was for another motive – purely for God's sake. He never mentioned, and did not like to have mentioned, his generosity, and when a poet praised him for his generosity, he attributed whatever good he had or did, to God's enabling him to have or do it. He never attributed his virtues and good deeds to himself.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, liked to distribute whatever he had. He engaged in trade until his Prophethood and had considerable wealth. After Prophethood he and his wealthy wife Khadija spent everything they had in the way of God. When Khadija, may God be pleased with her, died, they had no money to buy a shroud, and God's Messenger had to borrow money in order to bury the first person to embrace Islam and its first supporter.

If God's Messenger had so desired, he could have been the richest man in Makka, but he rejected such offers without hesitation. In addition, God ordained in the Qur'an that one-fifth of war spoils should be at the free disposal of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. However, he never thought of spending it on himself or his family. He lived a life of austerity as did his family who had to manage on scanty provision. In distribution of war spoils, he always preferred the others over his family members. His share in the spoils of the Battle of Hunayn consisted of 40,000 sheep, 24,000 camels and 16 tons of silver. Safwan ibn Umayya, from whom God's Messenger had borrowed some weapons before the battle, gazed upon the spoils with greed and bewilderment. Aware of Safwan's desire, the Messenger gave him as many camels as he wanted. Astounded with the generosity of God's Messenger, Safwan ran to his people and announced; 'O my people! Accept Islam without hesitation. For Muhammad gives in such a way that only a man who is never afraid of poverty and has a perfect reliance on God can give.' The generosity of God's Messenger sufficed for the guidance of Safwan and

his people, who had been among the most bitter enemies of Islam until just before that day.



A traveler in the world

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, regarded himself a traveller in the world. Once he said: What connection do I have with the world! I am like a traveller who is shaded under a tree and then continues on his way.

According to God's Messenger, the world is like a tree under which people are shaded. No one can live forever in the world, so people must make in the world the necessary preparation for the second part of the journey which will end either in Paradise or in Hell. The mission of God's Messenger was to guide people to truth, so he would spend whatever he had, his life and his possessions, to this end. As mentioned before, once 'Umar saw him lying on a rough mat and wept. When the Messenger asked him why he was weeping, 'Umar replied:

> – O Messenger of God! While kings sleep in soft feather beds, you are lying on a rough mat. You are the Messenger of God and therefore deserve more than any other people an easy life.
>
> – Do you not agree that the luxuries of the world should be theirs but those of the Hereafter ours? God's Messenger answered.

Islam came to secure justice and the well-being of mankind

Islam does not approve of monastic life. It came to secure justice and the well-being of mankind, but warns people against over-indulgence. It is for this reason that many Muslims have chosen an ascetic life. Although the Muslims generally became rich after the death of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, some like the Caliphs Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Ali preferred an austere life. This was partly because they felt the need to live as the poorest of their people live and partly because they strictly followed the Prophet's example. Once, during his Caliphate, Abu Bakr was offered a glass of cold water to break his fast with during Ramadan. He took the glass to his lips and suddenly began to weep. When asked the reason, he answered: 'One day, God's Messenger drunk such a glass of cold water offered to him and wept, saying: God says: 'On that day, you will be questioned concerning every bounty.' We will also be questioned concerning this water. I remembered that and wept.'

In the early days of his Caliphate, Abu Bakr made his living by milking the sheep of a woman. Sometime later he was assigned a small salary. While on his death-bed, he gave a pitcher to those around him to be submitted to the new Caliph after his death. 'Umar succeeded him and, when he broke the pitcher, some coins came out, together with a letter, which read:

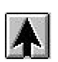
> 'I lived according to the living standards of the poorest of Madina, and put in this pitcher the amount left of my salary. Therefore, these coins belong to the Public Treasury and must be returned there.'

On reading the letter, 'Umar wept and remarked: 'You have left an unbearable burden upon those who succeed you, O Abu Bakr!'

God's Messenger was, in the words of Anas, 'the comeliest and most generous of people'. Jabir ibn Samura reports:

> We were once sitting in the mosque. The full moon was shining above us. God's Messenger

> entered. I looked first at the moon and then at the face of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. I swear by God that the Messenger's face was brighter than the moon.



The Messenger never refused a request

He refused no one and, as Farazdak said, did not say 'No' except in reciting the declaration of belief in the sitting position of prayer. Had it not been for the recitation of this confession, he would never have said 'No'.

Once, a Bedouin came to God's Messenger and asked him for something. The Messenger gave him what he asked for. The Bedouin continued to ask and the Messenger gave him until he had nothing left to give. When the Bedouin asked again, he promised to give it later when he had it. Angered by the rudeness of the Bedouin, 'Umar said to God's Messenger: 'You were asked and you gave; again you were asked and you gave; you were asked once more and you promised!' 'Umar meant that the Messenger should not make things so difficult for himself.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, did not approve of what 'Umar said. 'Abdullah ibn Hudafa al-Sahmi stood up and said: 'O God's Messenger, give and do not be afraid that the Owner of the Seat of Honour will make you poor!' Pleased with the words of Ibn Hudafa al-Sahmi, the Messenger declared: I was commanded to do so!

He never refused a request, for it was he who said:

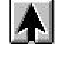
> The generous are near to God, near to Paradise, near to people, but distant from the Fire. The miserly are distant from God, distant from Paradise, distant from people, but near to the Fire.

Again, he said:

"Better your practice of Islam with generosity!"

> O people! Surely God has chosen for you Islam as religion, so better your practice of Islam through generosity and good manners.

The mercifulness of God's Messenger rose up as moisture into the sky, and then 'rained' as generosity to make hardened hearts propitious for the growing of 'good trees whose roots are firm and whose branches are in the heavens, and which yield their fruits every season by the leave of their Lord'.



THE MODESTY OF GOD'S MESSENGER

In social life each man has a window called status through which he looks out to see others and be seen. If the window is built higher than his real stature, he tries, through vanity and giving himself airs, to stretch himself up to be seen taller than he really is. If the window is set lower than his real stature, he must bow in humility in order to look out, to see and be seen. Humility is the measure of a man's greatness; just as vanity or conceit is the measure of low character.

The greater one is, the more modest he is

God's Messenger had a stature as high as to touch the 'roof of heavens', so he had no need to be seen. Whoever 'travels' in the 'realm of virtues', he sees him before every created being, including angels. He is, in the words of Said Nursi, the noble aide-de-camp of God, and he lowers himself to stay in the world for a while so that people might find the way to God. Since he is the greatest of mankind, he is the greatest in modesty — the greater one is, the more modest he is.

"The master of the people is the one who serves them"

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never regarded himself as greater than anybody else. No one could distinguish him among his Companions except for his radiant face and attractive person. He lived as the poorest of them, dressed like them, sat among them and ate with them, as he did with slaves and servants. Once, a woman saw him eating and remarked: 'He is eating as if he were a slave.' God's Messenger responded to her, saying: Could there be a better slave than me? I am a slave of God. He was once serving his friends, when a Bedouin came in and shouted: 'Who is the master of this people?' The answer of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was such that, besides introducing himself, it also expressed a substantial principle of Islamic leadership and public administration: The master of the people is the one who serves them. In the words of 'Ali, 'among people, he was one of them'. When he reached Quba accompanied by Abu Bakr during Hijra, some people of Madina who had not seen him before, tried to kiss the hands of Abu Bakr because, outwardly, there was no sign to distinguish the Prophet from Abu Bakr.

"I am a man whose mother used to eat dry bread."

In the construction of the Mosque in Madina after the Hijra, he carried two sun-dried bricks while everybody else carried one. In the digging of the ditch around Madina to defend the city in the Battle of the Ditch, the Companions bound a stone around their bellies because of hunger, but God's Messenger himself bound two, because he was more hungry than anybody else. Once, a man saw him and, due to his awe-inspiring appearance, began to tremble out of fear. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, calmed him, saying: 'Brother, don't be afraid! I am a man, like you, whose mother used to eat dry bread.' Again, a woman suffering from insanity pulled him by the hand and said: 'Come with me and do my housework.' God's Messenger went with the woman and did the work. As reported by 'A'isha, mother of believers, God's Messenger patched his clothes, repaired his shoes and helped his wives with the housework.

Although his modesty elevated him to 'the highest of the high', he regarded himself as an ordinary servant of God. Once he said: No one can enter Paradise by his deeds. When asked whether he could not either, he answered: I cannot either, but for the Mercy of God.

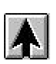
"Brother, include me in your supplications!"

His Companions attempted to do nothing without consulting him or getting his permission or approval. Once, 'Umar came to him and asked his permission to go for minor pilgrimage. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, gave him permission and made this request: Brother, include me in your supplications. 'Umar rejoiced so much at that that one day he was to say later: 'If the worlds had been granted to me that day, I would not have felt the same happiness.'

"A Prophet-slave, not a Prophet-king"

In addition to the other virtues of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, his humility was one of the greatest qualities. As he attained a higher rank each and every day, he increased in humility and servanthood to God. His servanthood is prior to his Messengership, as we mention in the declaration of faith: I bear witness that there is no god but God; I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. He preferred being a Prophet-slave to being a Prophet-king.

He was once sitting with the Archangel Gabriel, and said to him: For days, I haven't eaten anything. No sooner had he uttered this than an angel appeared and asked: 'O Messenger of God, God greets you and asks: "Do you wish to be a Prophet-king or a Prophet-slave?" Gabriel advised him: 'O Muhammad, be humble towards your Lord!' Humility was in fact indispensable to the character of God's Messenger, and he answered: I wish to be a Prophet-slave.



First a servant and then a Messenger

God praises his servanthood and mentions him as a servant in several verses of the Qur'an:

> When the servant of God stood up in prayer to Him, they (the jinn) were well nigh upon him in swarms (to watch his prayer). (al-Jinn, 72.19)

In challenging unbelievers to bring the like of only a single sura of the Qur'an; God also mentions him as a servant:

> And if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down on Our servant, then bring a sura of the like thereof, and call your witnesses beside God if you are truthful. (al-Baqara, 2.23)

After the death of Khadija and Abu Talib, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, became convinced that he could no longer stay in Makka with any hope of victory or security. Before things became too critical, he went to Ta'if in search of a new base for his faith, but he received there the worst kind of welcome. At a time when he felt himself without support and protection, God manifested His Mercy perfectly and honored him with the Ascension, raising him to His Presence. While narrating this incident in the Qur'an, God mentions him, again, as His servant to show that God's Messenger deserves Ascension through his servanthood:

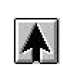
> Glory be to him, Who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Furthest Mosque, the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (al-Isra', 17.1)

Humility is the most important aspect of the servanthood of God's Messenger, who declared:

Whoever is humble, God exalts him, and whoever is haughty, God abases him.

'Ali describes the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings:

> God's Messenger was the most generous of people in giving out and the mildest and the foremost of them in patience and perseverance. He was the most truthful of people in speech, the most amiable and congenial in companionship and the noblest of them in family. Whoever sees him first is stricken by awe of him but whoever knows him closely is attracted to him deeply, and whoever attempts to describe him says: 'I have, either before him or after him, never seen the like of him, upon him be peace and blessings'.



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT



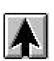
THE ETHOS CREATED BY GOD'S MESSENGER

This is the tribute of Lamartine, a French historian, to the persons of the holy Prophet of Islam:

"Is there any man greater than Muhammad?"

> Never a man set himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a more sublime aim, since this aim was superhuman: to subvert superstitions which had been interposed between man and his Creator, to render God unto man and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity a midst the chaos of the material and disfigured gods of idolatry then existing. Never has a man undertaken a work so far beyond human power with so feeble means, for he had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design no other instrument than himself, and no other aid, except a handful of men living in a corner of desert. Finally, never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution in the world, because in less than two centuries after its appearance, Islam, in faith and arms, reigned over the whole of Arabia, and conquered in God's name Persia, Khorasan, Western India, Syria, Abyssinia, all the known continent of Northern Africa, numerous islands of Mediterranean, Spain, and a part of Gail.
>
> If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great men to Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only, They founded, if anything, at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples, and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the ten inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls. On the basis of a Book, every letter of which has become law, he created a spiritual nationality which has blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race. He has left to us the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality, the hatred of false gods and the passion for the One and immaterial God. This avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Muhammad: the conquest of one-third of the earth to his creed was his miracle. The idea of the Unity of God proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of fabulous theogenies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of idols and set on fire one-third of the world. His life, his meditations, his heroic reviling against the superstitions of his country, and his boldness in defying the furies of idolatry; his firmness in enduring them for thirteen years of Makka, his acceptance of the role of the public scorn and almost of being a victim of his fellow-countrymen: all these and, finally his incessant preaching, his wars against odds, his faith in his success and his superhuman security in misfortune, his forbearance in victory, his ambition which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayer, his

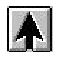
mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction. It was his conviction which gave him the power to restore a creed. This creed was two-fold, the Unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is; the latter telling what God is not. Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror, of ideas, restorer of rational diagram, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial states and of one spiritual state, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: is there any man greater than he?'



Greatest in all the aspects of life

Lamartine is right. It is really difficult for men of this century to understand the Prophet Muhammad fully, for the universe, life and man himself are compartmentalized and, as a result, people are devoid of unitary vision. However, in the person of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, the intellect of a philosopher, the valor of a commander, the genius of a scientist, the sagacity of a sage the insight and administrative ability of a statesman, the spiritual profundity of a Sufi Shaykh and the knowledge of a scholar were combined in perfect harmony and in utmost degrees. Philosophers produce students, not followers; social leaders or lenders of revolutions make followers but not complete men; Shaykhs of Sufism make 'Lords of submission', not active fighters or intellectuals. But in the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, we find the characteristics of the philosopher, the characteristics of a revolutionary leader, the characteristics of a warrior and statesman, and the characteristics of a Sufi Shayhk. His school is the is the school of the intellect and thought, the school of revolution, the school of submission and discipline, and the school of goodness, beauty, ecstasy and movement.

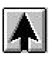
The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, made desert men — crude, ignorant, savage and obstinate — into an army of skilled fighters, a community of sincere devotes of a sublime cause, into a society of gentleness and compassion, and an assembly of sainthood, and into a host of intellectuals and scholars. In no community of the world and in the followers of no great man of history, including the prophets do we see fervor and ardor combined with gentleness, kindness, sincerity and compassion as history has shown among the sincere followers of the Prophet Muhammad in every century.



THE "GARDEN" OF MUHAMMAD WHERE NUMEROUS FLOWERS OF STATESMEN, COMMANDERS, PHILOSOPHERS, SCHOLARS, SAINTS, LITERARY MEN, AND SCIENTISTS HAVE BLOOMED

The School of the Prophet Muhammad – Islam – has been a 'garden' rich in every kind of 'flowers'; through it, like water cascading, God has brought forth grain and plants, and gardens luxuriant.'

Abu Bakr, 'Uthman and 'Ali, and the others in succeeding centuries, like 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, Mahdi al-'Abbasi, Harun al-Rashid, Alp Arslan, Mehmed the Conqueror, Salem and Sulayman were not only statesmen of the highest caliber and some invincible commanders, but they were also men of profound spirituality, deep knowledge, oration and literature.

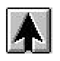


Commanders

In the blessed, pure climate of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, invincible generals of world-wide genius have grown. Among them, in the first generation, Khalid, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Abu 'Ubayda, Shurahbil ibn Hasana, A'la al-Khadrami and Ka'ka'a are almost unparalleled in world history. They were succeeded by world-famous generals of military genius as well as human tenderness and religious conviction and devotion, such as Tariq ibn Ziyad and 'Uqba ibn Nafi. When 'Uqba, the Muslim conqueror of North Africa, took leave of his family and mounted his horse far the great adventure which was to lead him through two thousand miles of conquest to the Moroccan shores of the Atlantic, he cried out: 'And now, God, take my soul'. He also said: 'O God but for this sea stretching before me. I would convey Your holy Name across to other lands!' We can hardly imagine Alexander the Great having such thoughts as he set out eastward to Persia. Yet, as conquerors, the two men were to achieve comparable feats; the idealism of 'Uqba and his 'possibility' with respect to the Divine Will were to be transmuted into irresistible action in this world. The empire of Alexander crushed after his death but the in the lands conquered by 'Uqba, Islam – the creed of 'Uqba – is still the only dominant world-view, creed and life-style of the people after fourteen centuries despite concerted attacks and efforts the Western powers have made to eradicate it for centuries.

> 'Be careful, Tariq! You were a slave yesterday. Today you are a victorious commander. And tomorrow you will be under the earth.'

Tariq was a victorious commander, but not only when he defeated the Spanish army of ninety thousand men wit a handful of self-sacrificing valiant, but also, and more than that, when he stood before the wealth and treasures of the King, saying: 'Be careful, Tariq! You were a slave yesterday. Today you are a victorious commander. And tomorrow you will be under the earth.' Yavuz Selim, who came centuries later as an Ottoman Sultan, and regarded the world as too small for two rulers, was truly victorious, not only when he crowned same kings and dethroned others, but also, and more than that, when he entered the Capital City after the conquest of Syria and Egypt, in silence at bedtime so as not to receive the enthusiastic welcome and applause of the people. He was also victorious when he ordered that the robe which had been soiled by the mud from the horse of his teacher should be put over his coffin because of its sanctity.



Scholars

During the rapid conquest after the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, many of the conquered people were distributed among the Muslim families, where they were brought up as the greatest scholars of their time. Those emancipated slaves were the foremost in religious sciences: In Basra Hassan ibn Hassan al-Basri, in Makka 'Ata ibn Rabah, Mujahid, Sa'id and Sulayman ibn Yasar, in Madina Zayd ibn Aslam, Muhammed ibn al-Munkadir and Nafi' ibn Abi Nujayh, in Qufa Alqama ibn Qays al-Nakha'i, Aswad ibn Yazid, Hammad and Abu Hanifa Nu'man ibn Thabit, in the Yemen Tawus and ibn Munabbih, in Khorasan 'Ata ibn 'Abdullah al-Khorasani, in Damascus Maqhul were all among enunciated slaves and yet the greatest of the jurists of a certain period. They all opened as splendid 'flowers' of the sweetest smell in the 'garden' of Muhammad. They established the code of the Islamic law and brought up thousands of jurists, who wrote and complied volumes that are still valued as references in the field of the Islamic law.

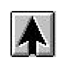
Among those jurists, Imam Abu Hanafi, for example, is the founder of the Hanafi school of conduct, which has hundreds of millions of followers today. This great Imam brought up gigantic scholars like Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Zufar and Imam Muhammad Hasan al-Shaybani, the teacher of Imam Muhammed Idris al-Shafi'i. The notes that Abu Hanifa dictated to Imam Muhammad al-Shaybani were

expounded centuries later by Imam Sarakhsi, known as the sun of Imams, in thirty volumes under the title of al-Mabsut.

Imam Shafi'i is regarded as reviver or renewer (mujaddid) in the religious sciences. He is the first to establish the principles of the methodology of the Islamic law. However, when his students once told Imam Sarakhsi that Imam Shafi'i had in memory three hundred fascicles of the Prophetic traditions, the latter answered: 'He had the zakat -one fortieth- of the traditions in my memory.'

Whether Imam Shafi'i or Abu Hanifa, or Imam Malik or Ahmad ibn Hanbal and the others, all were brought up in the school of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

Besides the jurists, the interpreters of the Qur'an such as Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Ibn Kathir, Imam Suyuti, Allama Hamdi Yazir and Sayyid Qutb and the world famous figures of Hadith such as Imam Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Maja, Nasa'i, Ibn Hanbal, Bayhaqi, Darimi, Daraqutni, Sayf al-Din al-Iraqi, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani and many others are ever-shining 'stars' in the 'luminous sky' of Islamic sciences, who have all received their light from the ever-shining 'Sun' of the 'sky of mankind', that is, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.



Greatest saints of all times

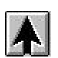
God, according to Islam, has created man on the best pattern, and as the most universal and all-embracing theatre of Divine Names and Attributes, but man, because of his heedlessness, might fall to the lowest of the law. So, Sufism, being the inner dimension of the Islamic tradition, is the way leading man to perfection or enabling him to re-acquire his primordial angelic state. Islam has also brought hundreds of thousands of saints in its history of fourteen centuries. What is more, since metaphysical quest of man or gnosis has never been separated in Islam from the study of nature, many practicing Sufis were also scientists. Abd al Qadir al-Jilani, Shah Naqshiband, Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, Hasan Shazili, Ahmad Badawi, Shaykh al-Harrani, Ja'far al-Sadiq, Junayd al-Baghdadi, Bayazid al-Bistami, Muhy al-Din al-'Arabi, Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, and many others have illumined the way of people to the truth and trained them in purification of the self. Being the embodiments of sincerity, Divine love and purity of intention, the Sufi masters have become the motivating factor and the source of power behind the Islamic conquests and the Islamization of conquered lands and peoples. The figures like Imam Ghazali, Imam Rabbani and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi are the 'revivers' or 'renewers' of the highest degree, who combined in their persons both the enlightenment of sages, knowledge of religious scholars and spiritually of greatest saints.

> Islam is the middle-of-the road religion which has an elaborate hierarchy of knowledge integrated by the principle of Divine Unity (al-Tawhid)

Islam is the middle-of-the road religion. One finds in Islam an elaborate hierarchy of knowledge integrated by the principle of Divine Unity (al-Tawhid). Physical ones all deriving their principles from the source of Revelation which is the Qur'an. Then there have developed within Islamic civilization elaborate philosophical, natural and mathematical sciences, each of which has its source in one of the Beautiful Names of God. It is the Name the All-Healing that shines on medicine; geometry and engineering depend on the Names the All-Just, the All-Determiner and the All-Shaper and the All-Harmonizing. Philosophy reflects the Name the All-Wise. And so on. On each level of knowledge nature is seen in a particular light. For the Jurists and theologians it is the background for human action. For the philosopher and scientist it is a domain to be analyzed and understood. On the metaphysical and Gnostics level it is the object of contemplation and the mirror reflecting suprasensible realities. 'The Author of Nature Who has inscribed His Wisdom upon every leaf and stone and Who has created the

world of nature in such a way that every phenomenon is a sign (ayah) singing the glory of His Oneness.

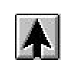
Since there has always been in Islam an intimate connection between the sciences and other fields of Islamic studies, the education of the Islamic scientist, particularly in the early ages, was brood enough to comprise most of the sciences of the day. But later in life each scientist become through his aptitude and interest an expert and specialist in one or more of the sciences.



Illustrious scientists

There can be no doubt that the institutions -academics, libraries, observatories, etc.- played a major role in the continuing vitality of Islamic science. These, together with the readiness of students to travel hundreds of miles to learn from acknowledged scholars, ensured that the whole corpus of knowledge was kept intact and transmitted from one place to another and from one generation to the next, with continual expansion and enrichment. There are, today, hundreds of thousands of Islamic manuscripts in the world's libraries, most of them in Arabic, of which a large number deal with scientific subjects. George Sarton, in his monumental Introduction to the History of Science, divided his work chronologically into chapters, giving each chapter the name of the most eminent scientist of the period in question. For the period from the middle of the second century AH (after Hijra) (eight century AD) to the middle of the fifth century AH (eleventh century AD), each fifty-year period carriers the name of a Muslim scientist; there are seven in all. Thus, we have the 'Time of al-Kharizmi', the 'Time of al-Biruni', etc. Within these chapters we have the names of many other important Islamic scientists and their main works. For example, Abu Yusuf Yaqub al-Kindi, known as 'The Philosopher of the Arabs', wrote, in addition to philosophy, upon a variety of subjects including mineralogy, metallurgy, geology, physics and medicine, and himself was an accomplished physician. Ibn al-Haytham was one of the principle Muslim mathematicians and without any doubt the greatest physicists. The names of over a hundred of his works are known to us, and some nineteen of these, on mathematics, astronomy and physics, have been studied by modern scholars. His work exercised a profound influence on later scholars, both in Islam and the West, where he was known Alhazen. One of his works on Optics was translated into Latin in 1572.

Al-Biruni, Abu'l-Rayhan, was one of the greatest scholars of medieval Islam, and certainly the most original and profound. He was equally well versed in the mathematics, astronomical, physical, and natural sciences and also distinguished himself as a geographers and historian, chronologist and linguist, as well as an impartial observer of suctions and creeds. Al-Kharizmi in Mathematics, Ibn Shatir in astronomy, al-Khazini in Physics, Jabir ibn Hayyan in Medicine were other leading figures remembered instantly, Al-Andalus was the main center from which the West desired knowledge and enlightenment for centuries.



ISLAM FOUNDED ALMOST THE MOST BRILLIANT CIVILIZATION IN HUMAN HISTORY

Islam founded almost the most brilliant civilization in human history. This should not be regarded as something strange since the Qur'an begins with the injunction, 'Read: In the Name of Your Lord Who creates'. The Qur'an orders man to read at a time when there was nothing yet to read, this means he is commanded to read the universe itself as the book of creation of which the Qur'an is the counterpart in Letters or words. Man has to observe the universe and perceive its meaning and content, and as he perceives this he comes to know more deeply the beauty and splendor of the Creator's system and the infinitude of His Might. Thus, it is incumbent upon man to penetrate into the manifold meanings of the

universe, discover the Divine laws of nature and found a world where science and faith complement each other so that man will be able to attain true bliss in both worlds.

Muslims, obeying the injunctions of the holy Qur'an, and following the example of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, studied both the Book of Divine Revelation, the Qur'an, and the book of creation, the universe, and founded a magnificent civilization. Scholars from all over the 'old' world benefited from the centers of higher learning at Damascus, Bukhara, Baghdad, Cairo, Faz, Qairwan, Zeituna, Cordoba, Sicily, Isfahan, Delhi and other great cities throughout the Muslim world. Historians liken the Muslim world of medieval ages, dark for Europe but golden and luminous for Muslims, to a beehive. Roads were full of students, scientists and scholars travelling from one center of learning to another.

For the first five centuries of its existence, the realm of Islam was the most civilized and progressive portion of the world. Studded with splendid cities, gracious mosques and quiet universities, the Muslim East offered a striking contras to the Christian West, which was sunk in the night of the Dark Ages. This bright civilization lasted for a long time. Down to the terrible disaster of the thirteenth century A. D. It still displayed vigor and remained for ahead of the Christian West.

Although Islam rules two-thirds of the old civilized world for at least eleven centuries, laziness and negligence of what was going on in neighborhood was responsible for the decay of the Islamic civilization, but not of Islam itself. Military victories and superiority that lasted as far as eighteen century induced Muslims to be content with what they had already achieved and to neglect further researches in the sciences. They abandoned themselves to living their own lives, reciting the Qur'an but without ever studying its deeper meanings. Meanwhile the Western world made great advances in sciences, which they had borrowed from the Islamic civilization. As already mentioned in this book, the sciences are in reality the languages of the Divine book of creation, which is another aspect of Islam. Therefore, whoever neglects to study this book is destined to lose in the worldly life, and this negligence was the reason Why Muslims fell under the domination of the West in later centuries. The cruelty, oppression and the imperialistic tendencies of the West have also made great contributions to this result.

It is impossible that Western civilization will least long since it is materialistic and far from satisfying man's perennial needs. Western sociologists such as Oswald spengler and other have predicted the collapse of this civilization, which is against human nature and values. Islam has been available to humanity for fourteen hundred years, and the bright world of the future can be founded upon the firm foundation of Islamic creed, ethics, spirituality and its law and socio-economic and political structure.



THE SUNNA OF THE PROPHET AND ITS PLACE IN ISLAMIC LEGISLATION

THE SUNNA OF THE PROPHET AND ITS PLACE IN ISLAMIC LEGISLATION

INTRODUCTION

The science of Hadith deals with the life of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, especially concentrating on his own sayings and actions, and on the actions he approved in others. In this chapter, we will restrict ourselves to his own sayings and actions.

The sayings of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, include his utterances out of the Qur'an, described as the Recited Revelation, whose meaning and wording belong to God exclusively. As for his actions, they include those actions whose rule and authority we must follow as law, and those, concerning his personal affairs, which are also a source of spiritual reward and blessing and which we should follow.

The science of fiqh, Islamic Law, does not concern itself with the latter, the personal affairs of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. The fuqaha' (scholars of fiqh) or jurists are of the opinion that if those affairs touch upon the voluntary and purposed acts, they are actions in the former sense relevant for law. However, if they are of the kind such as his likes and dislikes which do not constitute a basis for legislation, they lie outside the concern of the fuqaha'. According to the muhaddithun (scholars of Hadith or traditionists), everything related to God's Messenger is included in the meaning of Hadith (Tradition) and concerns the traditionists.

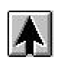
> **The Sunna of the Prophet, being every act, saying and confirmation of him, is the second source of Islamic legislation**

The Sunna of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, being every act, saying and confirmation of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is the second source of Islamic legislation after the Qur'an. All the scholars of religious sciences and sometimes even natural scientists resort to the

Sunna to establish the principles of their fields of study and to solve their difficulties.

The Qur’an enjoins Muslims to follow the Sunna

The Holy Qur’an enjoins the Muslims, in many verses, to follow the Sunna, as do numerous authentic Traditions of the Prophet himself. Except by a few who have been charmed by their own intellectual capacity, the Sunna has, from the beginning, been regarded as the second source of or basis for Islam and the Islamic life.



The Sunna is inseparable from the Qur’an

The Sunna is inseparable from the Qur’an. It clarifies the ambiguities of the Qur’an, it expands on what is brief therein, specifies what is unconditional therein, enables generalizations from what is particularly stated and particularizations from what is generally stated.

The details of the acts of formal worship were all established and expounded by the Sunna

The details of the acts of formal worship — prayer, fasting, alms-giving and pilgrimage — were all established and expounded by the Sunna of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. Again, it was established by the Sunna that no one can inherit from the Prophet and that a killer cannot inherit from the one he has killed. There are many more examples which show the place and role of the Sunna in embodying the Qur’anic commands, as well as in establishing new legislation such as, for example, the prohibition of eating the flesh of domestic donkeys and wild animals, and the prohibition of marriage to female cousins of a wife still living. Indeed, the Sunna is relevant to the practice of all aspects of Islam, and every Muslim must design his life according to it. For this reason, the Sunna has been studied almost with the same care as the Qur’an: it was recorded, it has been studied and transmitted down the centuries through succeeding generations.

During his own lifetime, God’s Messenger drew the attention of his Companions to his Sunna

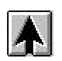
During his own lifetime, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, drew the attention of his Companions to his Sunna and ordered them to obey him absolutely. He spoke distinctly so that his audience could understand and memorize his words, and he encouraged them to convey every word of his to future generations; on occasion, he even urged them to write down whatever he uttered and said: Whatever comes out of my mouth is true.

The Companions, may God be pleased with them all, were fully attentive to what God’s Messenger said and showed great desire to appropriate his lifestyle even in his smallest acts. They regarded every word and every deed of this unique member of mankind as a Divine trust to which they must be faithful and tried to follow his example in every step they took. They honored all his pronouncements as a Divine gift, digested and preserved them and transmitted them to the succeeding generations.

Traditions were recorded during the lives of the Companions

Truthfulness being the cornerstone of Islamic character, the Companions were absolutely free from lying. Just as they did nothing to imply any distortion or alteration in the Qur’an and became the first and foremost means of its preservation and transmission to succeeding generations, so too they did their utmost to preserve the Traditions as they took them from the Prophet, upon him be peace and

blessings, and entrusted them to those coming after them. With the same care they gave to the memorization and recording of the Qur'an, some of them wrote down the Traditions and some others committed them to memory. Among the compilations of Hadith during the period of the Companions, three are very famous: al-Sahifah al-Sadiqah by 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As, al-Sahifah al-Sahihah by Hammam ibn Munabbih, and al-Majmu' by Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn Husayn.

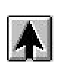


The Companions were extremely conscientious in relating the Traditions

The Companions were extremely conscientious in relating the Traditions. For example, 'A'isha and 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar were so meticulous in relating them word for word as not to change even a letter; Ibn Mas'ud and Abu al-Darda' would tremble as if caught by a fever when asked to report a Tradition from the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, the Caliph, ordered the recording and compilation of the Traditions which were orally preserved and circulated and the collection of individual compilations. Such illustrious figures as Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, Sha'bi, Alqama, Sufyan al-Thawri and Zuhri pioneered this sacred task. They were followed by the greatest specialists, who practised the utmost care in the transmission of Traditions including the study of their meaning and wording and careful critiques of their narrators.

It is thanks to the tireless energy and meticulous study of the traditionists (muhaddithun) that we have, after fourteen centuries, the second source of Islam in its original purity, by means of which we can follow the example of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, in designing our life. It is only through following the example of the Prophet that we can gain the good pleasure of God and travel along the way leading to Paradise. Even the greatest of saints receive their light from the 'sun' of guidance, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. As somebody says, the Prophet Muhammad is the 'sun' of guidance and virtues, while saints are 'stars' sending light to those in 'darkness' so that they may be able to find their way.



THE SUNNA AND ITS ROLE

What is the Sunna?

Sunna literally means 'a conduct and a path good or evil to be followed'. It is used, in its literal meaning, in the following hadith:

The one who establishes a good path in Islam, gets the reward of those who follow it without any decrease in their reward. Another one who establishes an evil path in Islam is burdened with the sins of those who follow it without any decrease in their burden.1

In its terminological meaning, Sunna has different connotations according to each group of the Traditionists, methodologists and jurists. According to the Traditionists, it includes everything having some bearing on or relation with religious commandments, reported from God's Messenger and categorized, according to the Hanafis (the followers of Abu Hanifa), as obligations, necessities, practices particular to or encouraged by the Prophet himself, recommended and desirable.

The methodologists take the Sunna as every word, deed and approval of God's Messenger. That is, according to them, the Sunna means the sayings and acts of God's Messenger himself, as well as those

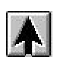
acts or sayings he approved in what he witnessed in his Companions.

Jurists approach the Sunna as the opposite of innovation in religion (bid'a) and is, according to them, a synonym of Hadith (Tradition), it is used for the words, deeds and approvals of the Prophet which provide a basis for legislation and categorization of people's actions.

Hadith, derived from the word haddatha, to inform, means, literally, tiding or information. It came, over time, to mean every word, deed and approval ascribed to God's Messenger. Ibn Hajar says: 'What is meant by Hadith in the language of the Shari'ah is everything related to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.'

Some scholars of fine discernment distinguish Hadith as that which is not Divine, not eternal or without beginning in time. This is the fine line which separates Hadith from the Qur'an: as against the Qur'an which is Divine and eternal, Hadith connotes something coming into existence at a point in time. God's Messenger himself distinguishes his sayings from the Qur'an, as can be understood from the following hadith:

> It is two things only, nothing else: the Word and guidance. The best word is the Word of God and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad.



THE CATEGORIES OF THE SUNNA

The Sunna is divided into three categories:

A. Verbal Sunna or the words of God's Messenger

The first category of the Sunna consists in the blessed words of God's Messenger, which provide a basis for many religious commandments. To cite a few examples:

a. Our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, decreed:

No bequest to the heir.

That is, a man can bequeath a certain, small portion of his wealth before his death but he cannot bequeath at all to his heirs since they will naturally inherit the large portion of his wealth. A bequest can be made to the poor or some social institutions in the service of people.

b. God's Messenger has many concise sayings which provided a basis for several legal rulings. Among them, the following is one of the basic principles of Islamic jurisprudence:

No harming and no returning harm for harm.

That is, no one may do harm to any other, nor may he retaliate against anyone by doing him harm; he may not return ill treatment for ill treatment.

c. The Qur'an enjoins alms-giving, but it does not set out for us what kind and what amount of wealth, and by what measure, one must give alms. All of these were established by the Sunna. For example, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared:

A tenth will be given (out of the crops grown in the fields) watered by rain or rivers; but half of a tenth (out of those grown in the fields) watered by man himself (by digging wells or building canals or carrying water on animals, etc.)

d. When asked whether one could do ritual ablution (wudu') with sea-water, God's Messenger gave the following answer, which has provided a basis for many other rulings:

A sea is that of which the water is clean and the dead animals are lawful to eat.

Generally, the Qur'an forbids eating the meat of animals which have died without being slaughtered according to Islamic rules. The Sunna, however restricts this 'general' rule (commandment) by allowing as food the flesh of sea creatures that have died in water.

B. Practical Sunna or the practices of God's Messenger

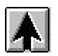
The Qur'an usually lays down general rules and principles and does not enter into details or particulars. For example, it enjoins prayer and pilgrimage but does not describe in detail how to do the prayer or pilgrimage. God's Messenger, taught by God through inspiration or through the archangel Gabriel, showed in practice how to perform all the religious commandments. Thus he set, through his life, a unique example to be followed by all Muslims. For example, he led the daily prayers before his Companions five times a day and ordered them: Perform the prayer the way you see me praying.

C. The Sunna based on the approvals of God's Messenger

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, corrected the mistakes of his Companions, but not by specifying the one who did the mistake; he never exposed anyone publicly. Instead, he would usually climb the pulpit and warn: What ails the people that somebody does that? If, on the other hand, he saw in his Companions something agreeable, he showed his approval tacitly, i.e. by keeping silent, or in some explicit way.

For example, once two Companions could not find water in the desert to do wudu' before the prescribed prayer and did the ritual ablution with sand (tayammum). However, when they came across some water some while later within the time of the same prayer, one of them did wudu' and re-did the prayer while the other did not. When they referred the matter to God's Messenger later, the Messenger responded to the one who had not repeated the prayer: You acted in accordance with the Sunna. Then, he turned to the other and said: For you, there is double reward.

To cite another example, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, ordered a march upon Banu Qurayza immediately after the Battle of the Trench and announced: Hurry up! We will perform the afternoon prayer there! Some of the Companions, concluding that they should be quick to reach the land of Banu Qurayza and pray there, started out without delay. Others understood the order to mean that they should make haste to arrive in Banu Qurayza's territory only and that they could perform the prayer before departure. God's Messenger approved the actions of both groups.



THE SUNNA IN THE QUR'AN

The Sunna, the example of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, is the main source of our religious life, promoted and encouraged by the Qur'an. To cite a few verses:

> He Who raised among the unlettered ones a Messenger from them, reciting to them His signs, purifies them and instructs them in the Book and the Wisdom. (al-Jumu'a,62.2)

What is meant by the Wisdom in the verse is, according to most interpreters of the Qur'an and the Traditionists, the Sunna. The Qur'an, being of a miraculous exposition, is never otiose nor exceeds the proper terms: as Wisdom in the verse comes after Book as a separate word, it must refer to something different from the Book. The Book is the Qur'an and the Wisdom is the Sunna which expands on what is brief in the Book and clarifies its ambiguities, specifies what is unconditional and general and vice versa, so that general principles or specific rulings can be understood from what is commanded in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an enjoins absolute obedience to the Messenger

The Qur'an in many verses enjoins absolute obedience to God's Messengers. This obedience is not due to their person, but because of their mission as the 'officials' of God in guiding people to truth both individually and socially, materially, intellectually and spiritually.

> We have not sent a Messenger save to be obeyed by God's leave. (al-Nisa', 4.64)

> O you who believe! Obey God and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him. (al-Anfal, 8.20)

Obedience to God means unconditional obedience to His Commandments in the Qur'an and His laws in life and in the operation of the universe. Obedience to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is following his way in all the aspects of life, in practicing the Qur'an, and in all the orders of the Messenger besides the Qur'an. The Sunna contains all the orders and prohibitions, warnings and encouragements of God's Messenger, who said: Take care! I have been given the Book and its like together with it.

Verse 20 of al-Anfal warns the Muslims not to turn away from the Messenger. Therefore, disobedience to the Sunna, even belittling and criticizing it, amounts to heresy, even apostasy.

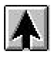
There are many other verses which emphasize the importance of the Sunna, or following the example of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings:

> O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority from amongst you. (al-Nisa', 4.59)

The verse stresses, besides obedience to God, obedience to God's Messenger, and the repetition of the verb obey in the imperative mood points to the fact that the Messenger has the authority to command or forbid, and that the Muslims must carry out his commands and refrain from his prohibitions. Besides, where obedience to those in authority who share the same faith and feelings as the Muslims, is ordered, the Prophet has a far greater right to be obeyed.

Another verse:

> Obey God and His Messenger and do not dispute with one another, lest you should be dissolved (dispersed) and your strength fade away; and be steadfast. (al-Anfal, 8.46)



Love of God is impossible for one to acquire without following the Prophet

According to this verse, the strength and unity of the Muslims lie in their submission to God and His Messenger. The Sunna is the unique way or example set by God's Messenger for the Muslims to follow. Also, it is through the Sunna that a Muslim can live according to the Qur'an. By putting the Qur'an into practice, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, established the way which the Muslims must follow. From this viewpoint, the Sunna is more comprehensive than the Qur'an and, without it, the Muslims cannot design their life according to the Qur'an. So, obedience to God is possible by obeying the Messenger or by following his Sunna. This is explicitly stated in the following verse:

> Say (O Muhammad!): 'If you love God, follow me so that God loves you'. (Al 'Imran, 3.31)

Love of God is impossible for one to acquire without following the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. No one can claim love of God, nor can he be loved by God, unless he follows the Sunna.

Another verse:

> Surely there is for you in God's Messenger an excellent example for him who aspires to God and the Hereafter, and mentions God oft. (al-Ahzab, 33.21)

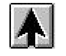
In order to secure himself against any deviation and to follow the Straight Path without going astray, a Muslim must cling to the Sunna

In order to secure himself against any deviation and to follow the Straight Path without going astray, a Muslim must cling to the Sunna of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

One day a woman came to 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and said: 'I have heard that you call down God's curse upon the women who have tattoos on their bodies, who pluck hairs on their faces, who force their teeth apart in order to look more beautiful, and who change the creation of God.' Ibn Mas'ud answered: 'This is to be found in the Scripture of God.' The woman objected: 'I swear by God that I have read whatever is between the two covers of the Book but could not find anything in it related to this matter', Ibn Mas'ud concluded: 'Our Prophet called God's curse upon the women who wear wigs, who join somebody's hair to theirs, and who have tattoos on their bodies. And, have you not read in the Qur'an: Whatever the Messenger brings to you, adopt it, and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it (al-Hashr, 59.7)?'

The Qur'an also declares:

> Nay, by your Lord, they will never become believers until they choose you as judge to settle the matters in dispute between them. (al-Nisa', 4.65)



THE SUNNA IN THE TRADITIONS

The way of the Prophet is the way of God, so following his way means walking in the luminous atmosphere of the Divine Message. For this reason, rejection of the Sunna implies disobedience to God. This is stated by the Prophet himself: Whoever obeys me, obeys God; and whoever disobeys me, disobeys God. Such a disobedience results in punishment of Hell:

'The whole of my nation will enter Paradise, except those who have rebelled.' When asked who rebelled, the Prophet answered: 'Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise; and whoever disobeys me

surely has rebelled.'

Only by following the Sunna can the Muslims maintain their unity

As explained earlier, the Sunna is the link between the Muslims of the past and the future. Only by following the Sunna can the Muslims maintain their unity. Concerning this, God's Messenger declares:

> Those who, among you, survive me will witness many disputes and disagreements. It is, therefore, incumbent upon you to follow my way and the way of my rightly-guided and rightly-guiding successors. Hold firm to that way, cling to it with your teeth.

Following the Sunna gains much more importance especially when Islam is attacked and the Muslims lose the upper hand in the world. The Messenger states that at a time when the Muslim community breaks with Islam and consequently disintegrates, the one who holds firm to his Sunna gains the reward of a martyr.

The Sunna being so important and vital in the maintenance of the Islamic life, whether individually or collectively, those who still dare to criticize it should be asked, as the Qur'an asks unbelievers: Where are you headed?



PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT II

THE ROLE OF THE SUNNA

THE ROLE OF THE SUNNA

The Sunna has, besides being the unique way or example shown by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in practising Islam perfectly, two main functions. Like the Qur'an, the Sunna is also a source of legislation; it enjoins and prohibits, it sets the principles to establish the religious obligations and necessities, and to determine what is lawful or unlawful. In addition to this function, the Sunna interprets the Qur'an, as will be explained below.

The Sunna interprets the Qur'an

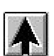
We recite every day in our daily prescribed prayers: 'Guide us to the Straight Path, to the path of those you have blessed, not of those who incurred (Your) wrath, nor of the misguided' (al-Fatiha, 1.5–7).

The verses mention two groups of people but do not specify them. The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, interpreted those who incurred God's wrath as the (deviated) Jews and the misguided as the (misguided) Christians.

The Jews killed many of their Prophets and caused upheavals and seditions in the world. Although they had once themselves been in guidance, and guided others to the Straight Path in the times of the Prophets Moses, David and Solomon, upon them all be peace, in the course of time, many amongst them were readily misled and incurred both God's wrath and public ignominy. Those following the same way, are also included in the meaning of the phrase those who incurred (Your) wrath. It is not only the Qur'an who condemns the deviated among the Jews; the Old and New Testament are full of harsh statements concerning them; the Bible is much harsher towards them than the Qur'an. In many of its verses, the Qur'an approaches both the Jews and the Christians very mildly and compassionately.

As for the Christians, they at first obeyed Jesus and followed his way despite persecutions of the severest kind. They heroically resisted both different hypocrisies and Roman oppression. However, many amongst them fell over time, under the influence of some near Eastern religions and philosophies, besides Roman paganism. By the time Christianity came to be accepted as the official religion of the Roman Empire, many fractions had already appeared in Christianity, so much so that more than three hundred Gospels had been circulating. Although there were many who remained devoted to the original creed of Jesus, upon him be peace, a considerable number amongst them had contaminated the pure teachings of Jesus with certain elements borrowed from other creeds. So, the Qur'an describes them as the misguided.

By interpreting the phrases, not of those who incurred (Your) wrath, nor of the misguided, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, identified them and clarified in what way and by what beliefs and deeds a man incurs God's wrath and goes astray. This is a warning for the Muslims not to follow in the footsteps of the Jews and Christians who had deviated and been misguided.



Examples of how the Sunna interprets the Qur'an

Out of many examples showing how the Sunna interprets the Qur'an, we can also cite the following two:

When the verse,

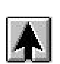
> Those who believed and did not mix their belief with wrongdoing: for them is security and they are those who are truly guided. (al-An'am, 6.82)

was revealed, the Companions, well aware of the meaning of wrongdoing, came to God's Messenger in fear and said: 'Is there anybody among us who has never done wrong?' The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, explained: It is not as you think. It is as Luqman said to his son: 'Do not associate any partners with God; surely, associating partners with God is a grave wrongdoing' (Luqman, 31.13).

'A'isha, Mother of Believers, and Ibn Mas'ud are of the opinion that the mid-time prayer in the verse,

> Attend the prayers without any omission and the mid-time prayer. (al-Baqara, 2.238)

is the afternoon prayer. Once 'A'isha ordered her servant to write a copy of the Qur'an for herself and reminded her: 'When you come to the verse, Attend the prayers without any omission, and the mid-time prayer, inform me.' When this verse was to be copied out, 'A'isha dictated to her servant: Attend the prayers without any omission, and the mid-time prayer, the afternoon prayer, and added: 'This is what I heard from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.'19 Although there are some other interpretations of the mid-time prayer, 'A'isha and Ibn Mas'ud, may God be pleased with them, were certain that it is the afternoon prayer.



The Sunna expands on what is brief in the Qur'an

In addition to interpreting the ambiguities of the Qur'an, the Sunna also expands on what is brief in it. To cite a few examples:

The Qur'an frequently orders: Perform the prayer accurately. However, it does not mention how and when to perform it. Although some leading interpreters of the Qur'an deduce the times of the prayer from some verses such as

> Perform the prayer correctly at the two ends of the day and nigh of the night; surely the good deeds remove the evil deeds. (Hud, 11.114)

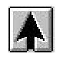
the exact time of each prayer was established by the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. He explains:

> On two occasions, the Archangel Gabriel (upon him be peace) led me in the five daily prayers at the Ka'ba. On the first, he performed the noon prayer at noon when the shadow of a thing was only as long as the base of it. When the shadow was as long as the thing itself, he performed the afternoon prayer. He performed the evening prayer at the time a fasting person breaks his fast,

> the late evening or night prayer when the dusk disappeared and the dawn prayer when it is no longer permissible for a fasting one to eat and drink. On the second occasion, he performed the noon prayer when the shadow was as long as the thing and the afternoon prayer when it was twice as long as the thing itself. He performed the evening prayer at the time he had performed it on the first occasion, the night prayer when it was one third of the night, and the dawn prayer when it was lighter but before sunrise. Then he turned to me and said: 'O Muhammad, each of the five daily prayers should be performed between these two ends of its times as the Prophets before you did it.'

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, taught his Umma also the conditions of the prayer and the obligatory, necessary and commendable acts validating and ennobling it, as well as the acts invalidating and damaging it.

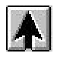
In addition to the times of the daily prayers, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, taught his Umma also the conditions of the prayer and the obligatory, necessary and commendable acts validating and ennobling it, as well as the acts invalidating and damaging it. Whether in words or through actions, he passed on to his Umma all the details of the acts of worship — prayer, fasting, alms-giving, pilgrimage and so on and, as he told them Perform the prayer the way you see me praying, he also said to them. Learn from me the rites and ceremonies of pilgrimage, after he actually performed it in the company of his Companions. If the Qur'an had elaborated the whole of the religious rites or the acts of worship down to their smallest details, the Book would have been many times its present size.



The Sunna restricts general laws and commands in the Qur'an

The Qur'an lays down the general principles of inheritance, without excluding anyone from it. But, when Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, went to Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, to transfer to her the heritage of her father, the latter replied: 'I heard God's Messenger say: We, the community of the Prophets, do not leave anything to be inherited. What we leave is for charity.' This hadith excludes the Prophets and their children from the law of inheritance.

Likewise, God's Messenger, upon him peace and blessings, decreed that the killer (of his testator) would be disinherited. That is, if somebody kills his parents, he cannot inherit from them; or if he kills his brother or uncle, he cannot inherit from them. This is another restriction put by the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, on the general commandments of the Qur'an concerning inheritance.



The Sunna specifies or particularizes what is general in the Qur'an

The Qur'an commands:

> And the thief, male and female, cut off the hands of both, as a recompense for what they have earned, and a punishment exemplary from God; God is All-Mighty, All-Wise. (al-Ma'ida, 5.38)

It is not clear in the command for what value of stolen goods the hand of a thief should be cut off. Also, in the verse,

> O believers, when you stand up to pray wash your faces, and your hands up to elbows... (al-Ma'ida, 5.6)

the part of the arm up to the elbows is included in the meaning of the hand. So, the Qur'an does not mention specifically what part of the 'hand' of a thief should be cut off. In addition, in what circumstances should this punishment be applied? For example, 'Umar, the second Caliph, did not apply it in time of famine. All such important details were established by the Sunna.

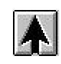
The Qur'an decreed:

> O you who believe! Consume not your goods among yourselves in vanity [through theft, usury, bribery, hoarding and so on], except it be trade by mutual agreement between you. (al-Nisa', 4.29)

Islam encourages trade as a way of making one's living, as long as it is carried out in accordance with the conditions of Islamic law. One of these conditions is, as stated in the verse, mutual agreement. However, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, decreed: Do not sell fruits until their amount is definite in the tree [to determine what amount of them will be given as alms]. He also decreed: Do not go to meet peasants outside the market to buy the goods they will sell [Let them earn the market prices of their goods].

In sum: God established general principles in the Qur'an and left their exposition and application in different circumstances to God's Messenger. He also authorized him to issue rulings, as necessary, and ordered the believers:

> Whatever the Messenger brings you, adopt it, and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it. (al-Hashr, 59.7)



PREVIOUS CONTENTS NEXT

PROPHET MUHAMMAD - THE INFINITE LIGHT II

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUNNA

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUNNA

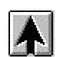
The Sunna, including the sayings, actions and approvals of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, which comprise one of the two main sources of Islam, was memorized and recorded, and carefully preserved, and has been handed down to us without any distortion or alteration. The Sunna is included in the meaning of the verse,

Surely We have sent down the Dhikr [the collection of Divine warnings and recitations, the Divine guidance] in parts, and surely We are its preserver. (al-Hijr, 15.9)

The establishment of the Sunna was necessary

The Sunna is the way of life of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings; the unique example set by him for all Muslims to follow. God sent His Messenger to guide people to truth, to lead them in all aspects of life and to show them how to design their life according to God's Commandments. The Messenger stood at the crossing-point between ignorance and knowledge, truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and between this world and the other, and established through all his words, his own actions and the actions he approved, the Divine way which all Muslims must follow.

The Sunna is the window opened on the Messenger of God, the sacred way leading to the blessings of Islam. Without the Sunna, it is impossible to follow Islam in practical life. Only through the Sunna can a Muslim establish a connection with God's Messenger and receive his blessings. Anyone who ignores the Sunna makes himself absolutely liable to deviation and cannot remain securely within the fold of Islam. The Sunna is the most unbreakable rope which guarantees the unity of Muslims and elevates those who hold fast to it to Paradise.



The motives for the establishment of the Sunna

The Qur'an urges Muslims to follow the Sunna

God commands in the Qur'an:

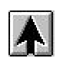
> Whatever the Messenger brings you, adopt it and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it; fear God and seek His protection, surely God is He Whose punishment is severe. (al-Hashr, 59.7)

Besides communicating the Qur'an to people, God's Messenger, as explained earlier, expanded on it through his words and conduct, applied it in practical life, and made new rulings to establish the

perfect Islamic life. The word whatever in the verse above covers all permissions and prohibitions and explanations whether relating to the Qur'an, which is called the Revelation Recited, or to the Hadith, the Revelation Unrecited. The Messenger never spoke on his own, whatever he spoke was a Revelation revealed, or an inspiration inspired. The verse above sternly warns the Muslims to obey the Messenger and proclaims that a Muslim can deserve God's protection only by carrying out the Prophet's orders and refraining from what he prohibited. Aware of this fact, the Companions were very attentive to his speeches and very careful in carrying out his commands.

A Muslim can obtain God's good pleasure and attain true bliss in both worlds only by following the example of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. The way the Prophet established leads man, bewildered in tumults of life and lost through the zigzags of deviation, to safety and eternal happiness. The Qur'an declares:

> Verily, there is for you a most excellent example in the Messenger of God, for him who aspires to God and the Last Day, and mentions God oft. (al-Ahzab, 33.21)



God's Messenger himself encourages the Muslims to learn his Sunna

The Companions, may God be pleased with them all, knew very well what they needed to do in order to be saved from eternal punishment and to receive God's blessing, so they showed great zeal in memorizing and recording the Prophet's sayings. They heard him pray:

> [On the day when some faces will be radiant and some mournful], may God make radiant [with joy and happiness] the face of the one who has heard a word from me and, preserving (memorizing) it, conveys it to others.

According to another version, he prayed:

> May God make radiant the face of the servant who has heard my speech and, committing it to memory and observing it in his practical life, conveys it to others.

The Companions also knew very well that only by following the Sunna, could they deserve the intercession of the Prophet, who said:

> On the Day of Judgement, I will put my head on the ground and pray to God for the forgiveness of my nation. I will be told: 'O Muhammad, raise your head and ask, you will be given whatever you ask; intercede, your intercession will be accepted.'

God's Messenger used to speak distinctly and sometimes repeat his words so that his audience might be able to commit them to memory. He taught them the supplications or recitation other than the Qur'an with the same care and emphasis as he taught the Qur'an. As explained above, he urged his Companions to communicate to others what they heard from him and teach others whatever they knew. He threatened those who conceal their knowledge with the punishment of Hell:

> If a man is asked about something he knows and he conceals it, a bridle of fire will be put on him on the Day of Judgement.

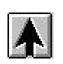
We read the same threat in the Qur'an:

> Those who conceal what God has sent down of the Book and sell it for a little price, they do not

eat in their bellies but the fire; God shall not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor shall He purify them; for them is a painful torment. (al-Baqara, 2.174)

Urged to learn the Qur'an and the Sunna and to teach both to others, and fearful of the threat against those who concealed anything of what they knew, particularly of the Qur'an and the Sunna, the Companions did their utmost to commit to memory and record the Prophet's sayings and actions in order both to practise them and convey them to others. They also came together and studied and discussed what they had already learned of the Book and the Sunna. The Messenger himself encouraged them to do this:

If a group of people come together in a house among the houses of God and recite from the Book of God and study it, surely peace and tranquillity descend upon them, (God's) Compassion envelops them and the angels surround them and God mentions them to those who are in His presence.



The zeal of the Companions to learn the Sunna and convey it to others

The Companions lived in an ethos that never lost its freshness. Like the growing of an embryo in the womb, the Muslim Community continued to grow and flourish so as to include all aspects or domains of life and was continuously 'fed' with Revelations coming one after the other. All these factors, besides the importance of the Sunna, and the heart-felt attachment of the Companions to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, motivated the Companions to record or commit to memory all the words and actions of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

For example, when 'Uthman ibn Mad'un died, God's Messenger grieved very much. He shed as many tears as he had shed for the martyrdom of Hamza. He kissed his forehead and attended the funeral. Witnessing this, a woman said at the funeral: 'How happy you are, O 'Uthman! You have become a bird to fly in Paradise'. The Messenger suddenly changed, turned to the woman and said: How do you know that, while I, a Prophet, do not know? – Unless God informs, no one can know whether a man is really so purified as to deserve Paradise and whether he will go to Paradise or Hell. – The woman collected herself and said: 'By God, I will no longer declare someone guiltless.'

Now, is it conceivable that that woman and the Companions present at the funeral should have forgotten that event? They did not forget it, as well as others that they withnessed during the lifetime of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

As another example: A man called Quzman fought heroically in the Battle of Uhud. Finally, he was killed and the Companions concluded that he had died a martyr. However, the Prophet warned them: No, he is in Hell. A man came and informed them that Quzman had committed suicide because of the wounds he had received, and before his death, he had said: 'I fought not for Islam, but out of tribal solidarity.' The Messenger concluded: God strengthens this religion even through a sinful man.

Like others, that event and the final comment of God's Messenger upon it, could never have been forgotten by the Companions, nor could they have failed to mention it whenever they talked about the Battle of Uhud or about martyrdom.

A similar incident took place during the conquest of Khaybar. 'Umar reports: 'On the day Khaybar was conquered, some of the Companions enumerated the martyrs. When they also mentioned so-and-so as a martyr, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, interrupted them and warned: No! I have seen him in Hell. He stole a robe out of the spoils of war before their distribution. Then he ordered me: Stand up and announce among the people: "No one ecxcept the believers (who are true representatives or embodiments of absolute faith and trustworthiness) can enter Paradise".'

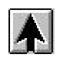
> Each word and action of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, provided the Companions with a new criterion for understanding Islam and designing their life according to it.

Each word and action of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, provided the Companions with a new criterion for understanding Islam and designing their life according to it. This motivated them to absorb, to imbibe, every word and action of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. When they settled in newly conquered lands, they conveyed what they knew to recent converts and in this way all the words and deeds of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, were transmitted by one generation to the other. The Companions were extremely well-behaved towards God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. They preferred to keep silent in his presence because of their absolute respect for him. They would let a Bedouin come forward and ask him about something.

One day a Bedouin named Dimam ibn Tha'laba came in and asked rudely: 'Who is Muhammad among you?' They answered: 'That one with white complexion, sitting there against the well.' The Bedouin turned to God's Messenger and addressed him loudly: 'O son of 'Abd al-Muttalib! I will ask you some questions. However they may be injurious to you, do not be annoyed at me!' Ask whatever comes to your mind, God's Messenger responded.

> – Tell me, for God's sake, your Lord and the Lord of those who came before you, is it God who sent you to these people as a Prophet?
>
> – Yes, it is.
>
> – Tell me, for God's sake, is it God who ordered you to pray five times a day?
>
> – Yes, it is.

The Bedouin continued to ask in the some manner about fasting and alms-giving. After he received the same answer each time, he concluded: 'I am Dimam ibn Tha'laba, from the tribe of Sa'd bin Bakr. They sent me to you as an envoy. Now, I have believed in whatever message you have brought from God.'



Unforgettable events

Like many others, this event too was not allowed to fall into oblivion; rather, the memory of it was handed down to succeeding generations until it was recorded in the books of Tradition.

Ubayy ibn Ka'b was one of the foremost in the recitation of the Qur'an. One day God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, sent for him and said: God ordered me to recite to you surah al-Bayyinah. Ubayy was thrilled with joy and asked: 'Did God mention my name?' The answer of God's Messenger moved him to tears.

This was so great an honour for the family of Ubayy that his grandson used to introduce himself in this way: 'I am the grandson of the man to whom God ordered His Messenger to recite sura al-Bayyina.'

This was the ethos in which the Companions lived. Every day a new 'fruit of Paradise', a new 'gift' of God, was presented to them and every day came to them with novelties. Previously unaware of faith, of a Divine Scripture and of Prophethood, those men of the Arabian deserts, gifted with keen memory

and talent for poetry, were brought up by God's Messenger as the educators of future Muslim generations. God chose them as the Companions of His Messenger and willed them to convey His Message to the whole world. After the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, they conquered in the name of Islam all the lands from Spain to China and from Caucasia to India with an unprecedented speed and conveyed the Qur'an and the Sunna everywhere they went. Many from among the conquered peoples joined their households and converted to Islam at their hands. They instructed those peoples in the Qur'an and the Sunna and prepared the ground for all the leading figures in Islamic sciences of the next generation to appear among them.

> In the view of the Companions, to learn the Qur'an and the Sunna and then instruct others in them was an act of worship

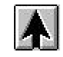
In the view of the Companions, to learn the Qur'an and the Sunna and then instruct others in them was an act of worship. They had heard from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings:

Whoever comes to this mosque of mine should come but to learn the good or to teach it. Whoever does so is the same in rank as the one who fights in the way of God.

So, as Anas reports, they frequently came together to discuss what they heard from the Messenger. The women, too, learned their religion from the Messenger, who assigned them one of the days of the week. Especially the wives of the Prophet conveyed to Muslim women whatever they learned from the Messenger, who established family ties with the people of Khaybar through Safiyya, with Banu Amir ibn Sa'sa'a through Maymuna, with Banu Mahzum through Umm Salama, with the Umayyads through Umm Habiba, and with Banu Mustaliq through Juwayriya. The women of each tribe came to their 'representative' in the house of the Prophet and asked her about religious matters.

In the last year of his Messengership, God's Messenger, upon him peace and blessings, went to Makka for pilgrimage, called the Farewell Pilgrimage. He gave a sermon, the Farewell Sermon, at 'Arafat and more than a hundred thousand people listened to him. He summarized his mission and warned them: Those who are present here should convey my speech to those who are not present.40 The last verse of the Qur'an revealed some time later contained another warning to practise and support the religion:

> Fear a day when you will be returned unto God and every soul shall be paid what it earned, and they will not be wronged. (al-Baqara, 2.281)



THE CARE THE COMPANIONS SHOWED IN FOLLOWING THE SUNNA

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The Companions, may God be pleased with them all, were absolutely obedient to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never thinking to oppose him in any word, action or decision of his. They were so imbued with love of the Messenger that they did their utmost to imitate him in every step he took. This was, in fact, the order of the Qur'an, according to which submission to the verdicts of the Messenger is something directly related to belief:

But no, by your Lord! They will not believe till they make you the judge in disputes between them, then they shall find in themselves no impediment touching your verdict, but shall surrender in full submission. (al-Nisa', 4.65)

Examples showing the submission the Companions to the Sunna

The following examples are only a few out of many that show the degree of submission the Companions showed to the Sunna.

Abu Bakr's dispatching Usama's army

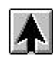
1. Shortly before his death, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, raised an army, and appointing 'Usama to its command, ordered him: Advance as far as the place where your father was martyred, and strengthen our rule there.

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, took to his bed before the departure of the army. When 'Usama visited him in his bed, he prayed for him. The army was just about to set out when God's Messenger said farewell to the world. Abu Bakr became the Caliph. Despite the uprisings in various parts of 'Arabia, Abu Bakr showed no hesitation about despatching the army. So, the Caliph Abu Bakr accompanied the army on foot to the outskirts of Madina and said: 'By God, even if wolves were to attack us from all directions, I will not lower that flag hoisted by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.'

'I cannot forsake anything that God's Messenger did.'

2. The death of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, shocked the Muslims in Madina. Everybody was consumed with grief. The election held at that critical point to choose the Caliph, caused little dissension among the Companions. Abu Bakr shouldered a very heavy task. The army under the command of 'Usama was waiting to be sent. News of uprisings came from various parts of the country. There were little groups offended at the election of the Caliph. It was just at this juncture that Fatima, the beloved daughter of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, came to Abu Bakr to demand the Prophet's share in the land of Fadak. Abu Bakr did not want to offend Fatima, equally he was determined to remain faithful to the Sunna. He used to say: 'I cannot forsake anything that God's Messenger did.' He had heard something from the Messenger, which Fatima had not: We, the

community of the Prophets, do not bequeath anything. Whatever we leave, is charity.



Abu Bakr's resolution in resisting rebellions

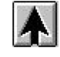
3. After the conquest of Makka, people from all parts of Arabia entered Islam in throngs but many of those new converts were, of course, not as devoted to Islam as the Companions in Madina. While some of them apostatized under the leadership of false prophets such as Musaylima the Liar and revolted against Madina, there were still others who showed signs of revolt in refusing to pay the prescribed alms-tax. Abu Bakr did not give in to the demands of any of the rebellious parties and re-established peace and security in Arabia.

'Umar's renouncing his opinions in the face of Traditions

4. 'Umar, the second Caliph, was known as 'the one who submits himself to truth'. Unaware of the Prophet's decree, he judged, through his own reasoning, on the money to be paid as a recompense for cutting a finger. A Companion opposed him, saying: 'O Commander of the Faithful! I heard God's Messenger say: The blood money for both of the hands together is the same amount as that paid for a life. So, this amount is shared out equally among the fingers, as ten camels for each.' 'Umar gave up his opinion immediately and said to himself: 'O son of Hattab! How dare you judge, through your own reasoning, on a matter God's Messenger decreed?'

5. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari went to visit 'Umar in the office of Caliphate. He knocked on the door three times but there was no answer. After Abu Musa left, 'Umar opened the door and asked who had knocked on the door. On discovering that it was Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, 'Umar sent for him and asked why he had left. Abu Musa answered: 'God's Messenger said: When you visit someone, knock on the door. If you are not allowed to enter after you knock on it the third time, return. 'Umar asked Abu Musa if he could bring a witness to corroborate this hadith which he did not know. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri testified on behalf of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and 'Umar conceded.

6. When 'Umar was stabbed while prostrating in the mosque, they asked him if he wanted to designate someone as his successor. 'Umar answered: 'If I designate, it is true that one who is better than me did so. If I do not designate, still it is true that one who is better than me did not do so.' By this, 'Umar meant Abu Bakr and God's Messenger respectively. 'Umar was certain to prefer the choice of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. However, in order to prevent a possible disagreement among the Muslims, he left the matter to a consultative committee he formed.



The Companions' insistence on copying whatever the Messenger did

7. When 'Umar saw Zayd ibn Khalid al-Juhani performing a supererogatory prayer after the afternoon prayer in mosque, he reproached him for doing what God's Messenger had not done. Zayd ibn Khalid responded to him: 'Even if you were to break my head into pieces, I will never give up this prayer of two rak'ah because I saw God's Messenger perform it.'

As reported from Umm Salama, Mother of Believers, one day God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, could not perform the supererogatory prayer of two rak'ah after the noon prayer because he was busy with the expedition visiting him. He performed that prayer after the afternoon prayer. Zayd ibn Khalid al-Juhani must have seen God's Messenger performing it then.

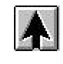
8. The fourth Caliph 'Ali once drank water while standing. Maysara ibn Ya'qub asked him critically: 'Are you drinking while standing?' 'Ali answered: 'If I drink while standing, it is because I saw God's Messenger do so. If I drink while sitting, it is because I saw God's Messenger do so.'

Whatever the Companions witnessed in God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, they tried to imitate it.

9. A Muslim is permitted, instead of washing his feet in ritual ablution, to wipe the upper surface of light thin-soled boots worn indoors (or inside overshoes) with wet hands. To illustrate that it is not permissible to judge through personal reasoning on a matter established in the Sunna, 'Ali said: 'If I had not seen God's Messenger wipe the upper surface of his light thin-soled boots, I would deem it more proper to wipe their soles.'

10. In Islam, if a man murders another by mistake, the heirs of the murderer must pay the blood-money. 'Umar was of the opinion that a wife cannot inherit the blood-money due to her husband. However, Dahhak ibn Abi Sufyan informed him that when Ashyam ibn Dibabi died, God's Messenger gave to his wife out of his blood-money. 'Umar declared: 'From now on, wives will inherit the blood-money of their husbands.'

11. Abu 'Ubayda ibn Jarrah was the commander of the armies fighting in Syria. When 'Umar went to visit him, pestilence had already broken out in Amwas, where Abu 'Ubayda was. Before 'Umar entered the city, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-'Awf warned him: 'I heard God's Messenger say: If you hear that pestilence has broken out in a place, do not enter it. If you are already in the place where pestilence has broken out, do not leave it. 'Umar, so obedient to the Sunna of the Prophet, therefore returned before he could see his faithful friend for the last time before his death.



THE UTMOST CARE SHOWN IN RELATING THE TRADITIONS

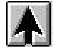
Whether of the Companions or the succeeding generations, those who constituted the first two or three links in the chains of the Traditions, were quite meticulous in the narration or transmission of ahadith. As will be elaborated below, they showed the utmost care and exactness in distinguishing the sound from the fabricated ones and, after committing to memory word for word, transmitted the sound ones to the following generations. The following examples show the motives for this exactness:

The warning of the Prophet against lying

Islam is based on truthfulness which distinguishes between Islam and unbelief. A Muslim refrains from lying to the utmost degree. The first generations of Islam, the Companions and their successors, proved their utmost attachment to Islam by the world-admired sacrifices they made in order to spread Islam. Also, they feared God very much and lived austerely, not indulging in the comforts of life. Many great scholars and saints appeared among them and the examples they set have been followed by succeeding generations up to the present day.

Along with the emphasis Islam puts on truthfulness, God's Messenger severely warned people not to lie against him: Whoever lies against me, should prepare his abode in the Fire. He also warned: Whoever relates from me falsely is a liar.

Is it at all conceivable then, in the face of such severe warnings, that the Companions, who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Islam, which is based on truthfulness, should have lied against the Messenger?



The self-control of the Companions in narrating the Traditions

Because of the important place the Tradition has in Islam and due to the warnings of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the Companions were very careful in narrating Traditions. They feared lest they should fail to narrate them word for word and thereby cause misunderstandings. For example, the fourth Caliph 'Ali, who was the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and who was always with him, used to say: 'I fear to narrate a Tradition from God's Messenger so much that I would rather fall from heaven than speak a lie on his behalf.'

'Abdullah ibn al-Mas'ud was among the foremost in nearness to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. He was also one of the most knowledgeable among the Companions. When he was asked to report from God's Messenger, he began with 'The Messenger of God said'; then he stopped,

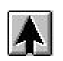
bowed his head, took in a deep breath, unbuttoned his collar and his eyes filled with tears. After the narration, he added: ‘The Messenger of God said this, or something like this, or something more or less like this’.

Zubayr ibn ‘Awwam was one of the ten Companions who were assured of entry to Paradise. He narrated only a few Traditions from God’s Messenger. When his son asked him why he did not narrate Traditions from the Messenger, Zubayr replied: ‘I feared very much lest I should utter a word contrary to what God’s Messenger really said. For he declared: Whoever lies against me intentionally, should prepare his abode in the Fire.’

Anas ibn Malik, who served God’s Messenger for ten years, said: ‘Were it not for fear of making a mistake, I would make many more narrations from God’s Messenger’.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Layla met 500 Companions. When he visited a place, people would say: ‘The man who met 500 Companions has come to our town.’ He had great influence on Abu Hanifa and Imam Abu Yusuf. He reports: ‘I was personally familiar with 120 Companions. It sometimes happened that all of them were in the same mosque. When they were asked about something, each waited for the other to answer, and if they were to narrate a Tradition, no one would dare to. At last, one of them made the narration trusting in God and added: ‘The Messenger said this, or something like this, or something more or less like this’.

Zayd ibn Arqam was among the first to convert to Islam. In the early days of his mission, God’s Messenger came together with the Muslims secretly in his house. He was the superintendent of the Public Treasury during the caliphates of ‘Umar and ‘Uthman. When he witnessed ‘Uthman give out from the treasury to his relatives, he went to him and said: ‘O Commander of the Faithful! People will feel suspicious of you, and they will no longer trust me. Please permit me to resign.’ When ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Layla asked this honest man to narrate a Tradition, he answered: ‘My son ! I have become old and forgetful. Narration from God’s Messenger is something very hard to do.’



Narration of the Traditions word for word

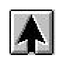
There is a matter in the science of Tradition, namely whether it s absolutely necessary to narrate a Tradition word for word. Although literal narration is better and always preferable, narration of meaning is permissible on condition that the narrator is expert in the language, and the word used to give the meaning is well-fitted to the context, and the original has been completely forgotten. However, the Companions were very careful in narrating Traditions literally despite this permission. For example, one day ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr narrated: The like of a hypocrite is like sheep left between ‘rabidayn ’(two flocks). ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar, who was present, objected: ‘He did not say so. I heard God’s Messenger say: The like of a hypocrite is like a sheep between ‘ghanamayn’ (two flocks). The meaning is the same; the difference is only between the words rabidayn and ghanamayn.

The same care the Companions showed in literal narration was also shown by the scholars or narrators belonging to the generation following the Companions. For instance, in the presence of Sufyan ibn ‘Uyayna someone narrated: ‘God’s Messenger forbade leaving to fermentation (an yuntabadha) the juice (of grapes, dates and the like) in the bowls made of pumpkin and lined with pitch’. Sufyan ibn ‘Uyayna objected and said: ‘I heard Zuhri narrate it: "God’s Messenger forbade leaving to fermentation (an yunbadha) the juice (of grapes and dates and the like) in the bowls made of pumpkin and lined with pitch’. Though of exactly the same meaning, the difference is that as conjugation.

Bara ibn ‘Adhib related:

> God's Messenger advised me: Do ritual ablution before going to bed. Then lie on your right side and say this prayer: 'O God, I have submitted myself to You and I have committed my affair to You; I have sheltered in You, in fear of You and in quest of You. There is no shelter from you except in You. I believed in Your Book You sent down and Your Prophet You raised.' In order to memorize the prayer immediately, I repeated to the Messenger and said at the end of it: "and Your Messenger You raised". Our master corrected me, saying: and Your Prophet You raised.'

A man has dreams in sleep, and true dreams constitute a forty-sixth of Prophethood, since God's Messenger had true dreams in the first six months' period of his Prophethood, which lasted twenty-three years. Since dreams are therefore related to Prophethood, the Messenger corrected Bara ibn 'Adhib. This care was shown by almost all of the Companions, who studied the Traditions they heard from God's Messenger and discussed them, their meaning and connotations. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, commanded them: Commit Traditions to memory and study them. Some of them are associated with some others. Therefore, come together and discuss them.



The verification of the Companions and those succeeding them

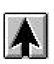
The Companions did not only study the Traditions and discuss them among themselves, they also verified the meaning of what God's Messenger related to them. Of course, none of them told lies, being in utmost fear of Divine punishment, but the reporters might have mistaken the meaning of the Tradition or missed an important point in receiving it from God's Messenger or interpreted it wrongly. So, without thinking of any opposition to God's Messenger in any matter, they tried to understand the true purpose of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and discussed what they received from him.

Once, a woman asked Abu Bakr, the Caliph, whether she could inherit from her grandchildren. Abu Bakr answered: 'I have not seen a verse in the Book of God which gives you the right to inherit from your grandchildren, nor do I remember God's Messenger having said anything on this point.' However, Mughira ibn Shu'ba, who was present, stood up and said: 'God's Messenger gave to the grandmother a sixth of the inheritance'. Abu Bakr asked Mughira if there was anybody else who had witnessed God's Messenger having done so. When Muhammad ibn Maslama testified to it, Abu Bakr gave to the woman a sixth out of what her grandson had left.

On hearing God's Messenger declare, The one called to account for his deeds on the Day of Judgement by God will be ruined, 'A'isha asked: 'How about the Divine declaration in the Qur'an: Then they will be called to account (for their deeds) and it will be an easy act of giving account?' The Messenger answered: It is about presentation. Everyone will give account to God for their deeds. If a man denies his evil deeds and God enumerates them to him, that man will be ruined.

As recorded in Bukhari, 'Umar narrates:

> I heard Hisham ibn Hakim pronounce some words of the sura al-Furqan, somewhat differently from the way God's Messenger taught me. I waited patiently until he had finished praying and then I asked him: 'Who taught you to recite this surah in this way?' 'God's Messenger did,' he answered. I took him to the Messenger, whom I informed of the matter. The Messenger asked Hisham to recite the sura. Hisham recited and the Messenger nodded, saying: This is the way it was revealed to me. Then, he ordered me to recite. I recited, and again he nodded and said: Thus it was revealed. Then, he added: Surely, the Qur'an is revealed in seven different ways. Recite it in the way easiest to you.



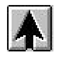
Traveling long distances to learn even a single hadith of the Messenger

The attachment of the Companions to the Sunna was such that they did not show any reluctance to travel long distances to learn even a single hadith. For example, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari travelled from Madina to Egypt to ask about a hadith the exact wording of which he was not sure of. Among those who had received it from God's Messenger only 'Uqba ibn Amir was alive and living in Egypt. Abu Ayyub arrived in the capital city and calling on its governor, Maslama ibn Mukhallad, took a guide with him. He found 'Uqba in a street and asked him about the hadith: Whoever covers (hides) a defect of a believer in the world, God will cover his defects in the Hereafter. Abu Ayyub's memory was confirmed as exact. He took leave of 'Uqba, saying: 'I came just to ask about this hadith. I wouldn't like to make my intention impure [by staying] for some other reason'.

Again, as related in Bukhari, in order to receive a hadith directly from its narrator, 'Abdullah ibn Unays, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah travelled for a whole month. He found 'Abdullah and said to him: 'I have been informed that you relate a hadith which I did not hear from God's Messenger, upon him be peace, Fearing that either of us may die before I learn it, I have come to you'. Jabir learned the hadith and returned to Madina.

The journeys undertaken for the sake of Hadith continued in the following centuries. Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, Masruq ibn Ajda and others made long travels sometimes in order to learn a single hadith and sometimes even to confirm a single letter of one hadith. As related by Kathir ibn Qays, a lover of knowledge travelled from Madina to Damascus to learn a single hadith from Abu al-Darda'.

Those who succeeded the Companions showed the same care in the narration of Traditions as the Companions had. As stated by A'mash, they would prefer the sky to collapse on them than to add so much as a wrong vowel to a hadith.



After internal conflicts broke out in the Muslim Umma, the scholars began to scrutinize whatever they heard in the name of Hadith

The Ahl al-Sunna wa l-Jama'a are all agreed upon the absolute truthfulness of the Companions. However, after internal conflicts broke out in the Muslim Ummah, the scholars of the second generation, the generation succeeding the Companions, began to scrutinize whatever they heard in the name of Hadith. They inquired into the truthfulness of those who narrated a hadith. Muhammad ibn Sirin says: 'We did not use to ask about the persons who narrated the hadith. But, after the seditions broke out, we began to ask.'

People of weak character and ungrounded, weak faith, fabricated Traditions in order to promote their sectarian beliefs. While the Nasiba (enemies of 'Ali, the fourth Caliph, among the Umayyads and their supporters) forged Traditions in favour of 'Uthman and Mu'awiya and against 'Ali, the Rafidites (extremists in Shi'a) did the opposite. This roused the meticulous, truth-seeking scholars to detailed and careful examination of what they heard as a hadith and of the character of those who narrated them. Abu al-'Aliya says: 'We were no longer content with what was reported to us from a Companion. In order to receive it directly from the Companion or Companions who had narrated it and ask other Companions who knew about it, we travelled [from place to place]'.

Again, as related by Imam Muslim, Bushayr al-'Adawi narrated a hadith to Ibn 'Abbas. When the latter paid no attention to him, Bushayr asked in surprise: 'What ails you that you give no ear to me when I

narrate a hadith to you?' Ibn 'Abbas answered: 'In the past, when somebody began to narrate you a hadith saying 'God's Messenger said', we felt our hearts jump for joy and excitement and were fully attentive. Nevertheless, after people began to travel from place to place on docile or unruly horses, we no longer receive anything other than what we already know.'

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, the great scholar of Muslim Spain (Andalusia), reports from Amir ibn Sharahil al-Sha'bi, one of the greatest scholars of the generation following the Companions: Rabi' ibn Husayn relates to Sha'bi the hadith: 'The one who recites ten times, There is no god but God, One, and there are no partners with Him. His is the kingdom, and His is all praise, He gives life and makes to die. He is powerful over everything, may earn as much reward as one earns by emancipating a slave.' Sha'bi asked Rabi' who had narrated that hadith to him. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Layla', Rabi' answered. Sha'bi left and found Ibn Abi Layla, who was living in another city. Ibn Abi Layla testified to the authenticity of the hadith; he had heard it from Abu Ayyub al-Ansari.

Many great scholars such as Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Ibn Sirin, Sufyan al-Thawri, Amir ibn Sharahil al-Sha'bi, Ibrahim ibn Yazid al-Naha'i, Shu'ba, Abu Hilal, Qatada ibn Di'ama, Hisham al-Dastawa'i and Mith'ar ibn Qudam did their utmost to distinguish between authentic Traditions and fabricated ones. When they were not sure of the authenticity of a Tradition, they never hesitated to ask each other about it. For example, Abu Hilal and Sa'id ibn Abi Sadaqa appealed to Hisham al-Dastawa'i about a Tradition the exact wording of which they were not sure of. Shu'ba and Sufyan al-Thawri referred to Mith'ar ibn Qudam a matter about which they did not have exact knowledge. They did not allow a fabricated Tradition to spread, and whenever and wherever they witnessed a fanatical sectarian narrate a Tradition, they asked him from whom he had heard it.



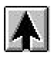
THE UTMOST CARE OF THE HADITH SCHOLARS IN ESTABLISHING THE AUTHENTIC TRADITIONS

THE UTMOST CARE OF THE HADITH SCHOLARS IN ESTABLISHING THE AUTHENTIC TRADITIONS

Those truth-loving and truth-seeking scholars did not refrain, for the sake of Hadith, even from revealing the weak spots of their kin. For example, Zayd ibn Unaysa warned the traditionists not to receive hadith from his own brother, perhaps because of his forgetfulness or carelessness or sectarianism. When asked about his father, ‘Ali ibn al-Madini, who is the first to write on the Companions, answered: ‘Ask others about him.’ When they insisted, he explained. ‘Hadith means religion. My father is weak on this point.’ Waki’ ibn Jarrah was brought up in the school of Abu Hanifa, and was one of the tutors of Imam Shafi‘i, who said: ‘As far as I know, I have never forgotten anything once I heard it; nor do I remember anything which I had to repeat in order to memorize, if I heard it once’. Despite his keen memory, Imam Shafi‘i once complained to Waki‘ ibn Jarrah about his poor memory. Waki’ answered: ‘Refrain from sins. Know that knowledge is a light from God. Therefore it is not granted to a sinful man.’ When his father, Jarrah, was narrating a hadith, Waki’ was always present near him. When asked why, he answered: ‘My father works at the finance department of the state. I am afraid that he might soften some Traditions in favour of the government. I accompany him so that I can prevent him from such a lapse.’

While the Traditions were being recorded on the one hand, they were entrusted to the memories of some greatest traditionists on the other. For example, Ahmad ibn Hanbal memorized around one million Traditions including authentic, good, weakly transmitted and fabricated ones, and some of which were identical in text but handed down by different chains of narrators. He formed his Musnad, containing thousand Traditions, out of 300 thousand Traditions. Yahya ibn Ma‘in, who dedicated himself to Hadith, committed to memory both authentic Traditions and fabricated ones. When asked by Ibn Hanbal why he did so, Ibn Ma‘in answered: ‘I inform those coming to me of fabricated Traditions so that they may choose the authentic ones.’ There were many other critics of Hadith, who knew hundreds of thousands of Traditions by heart. Among them, Zuhri, Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Qattan, Bukhari, Muslim, Daraqutni, Hakim, Dhahabi, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani and Imam Suyuti were the most famous.

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of Muslim traditionists, authentic Traditions were distinguished from fabricated ones. Those traditionists, besides recording authentic Traditions in volumes and memorizing them, wrote volumes in which they explained the character of narrators and distinguished the reliable from the unreliable, the careful from the careless, the profound and meticulous from the superficial, and the God-fearing from the heedless and careless. When people warned the critics that they revealed the defects of people and brought shame on them, they used to answer: ‘Hadith means religion, therefore it should be given greater care than hiding the defects of those who narrate them.’83 Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Qattan, who was renowned for being alert to sins, used to say: ‘In the presence of God, I would rather have them as enemies than God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings’.84



Fabricated Traditions were picked out and removed

Traditionists picked out fabricated Traditions in many ways.

The ways the authentic Traditions were distinguished:

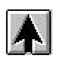
One of those ways was the confession of fabricators. It frequently happened that those following deviant sects were guided to truth and acknowledged the Traditions they had fabricated.

Secondly, traditionists were extremely sensitive to lying. They did not receive a Tradition from one who told even a single lie during his life. Besides truthfulness, they also stipulated that a narrator should have a keen memory and be very careful in practising Islam. Also, he should not be a fanatical sectarian. Further, if forgetfulness and similar kinds of mental difficulty befell a reliable narrator, they no longer received Traditions from him either. For example, when Ibn Abi Lahi‘a, famous for austerity and God-fearing, lost his notebook from which he used to relate Traditions, Imam Bukhari restricted himself to those of his narrations confirmed or reinforced by other reliable narrators.

There is a wise saying that a man’s literary style is identical with himself. That is, if you are a careful reader, you can distinguish a literary man by his style from others. Muslim traditonists dedicated themselves to Hadith wholly and were so familiar with the literature of Hadith that they could easily distinguish the sayings of the Prophet from those of even the most eminent literary men.

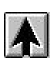
Another way of distinguishing authentic Traditions from fabricated ones was to judge them according to the Qur’an and the mutawatir hadith. If a hadith or Tradition was reported from the Prophet by three or more Companions and then handed down by several chains of transmission composed of reliable narrators, it is called mutawatir. Traditions reported from the Prophet by one Companion only are called ahadi. Ahadi Traditions were usually accepted as authentic after they were judged according to the Qur’an and mutawatir Traditions.

Although not an objective method, some saintly scholars saw God’s Messenger while awake and received directly from the Prophet himself the hadith qudsi, I was a hidden treasure. I wished to be known and therefore created the universe. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti is reported to have met with God’s Messenger several times while awake. Before writing down a hadith which he concluded to be authentic, Imam Bukhari performed ritual ablution and referred it to God’s Messenger in a way particular to him. It was only after getting the approval of the Messenger that he wrote down the hadith in his notebook.86 There were some who saw the Companion who had narrated the hadith from the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.



Books on narrators

The critics of Hadith formed compendious books giving detailed information about narrators. They explained the character and life-history of each: where and when he was born, where he emigrated and lived, whom he was taught by, from whom he received Traditions and to whom he narrated them and where he died. The first who wrote on this topic is ‘Ali ibn al-Madini, whose book is called Kitab al-Ma‘rifat al-Sahaba (The Book of Knowledge about the Companions). Among others, al-Isti‘ab fi Ma‘rifat al-Ashab (The Comprehensive Book of Knowledge about the Companions) by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, al-Isaba fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba (Finding the Truth in Judging the Companinons) by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Usd al-Ghaba (The Lions of the Forest) by Ibn al-Athir, al-Tabaqat al-Kubra’ (which is a most comprehensive biographical dictionary of the leading Companions and of the scholars of the following generation) by Ibn Sa‘d, and Tarikh Ibn Asakir (History by Ibn Asakir), Tarikh al-Bukhari (History by Bukhari) and al-Tarikh al-Kabir (The Great History) by Yahya ibn Ma‘in, are the most significant.



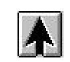
Voluminous books containing the authentic and fabricated Traditions

The greatest traditionists such as Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Nasa'i, Ibn Maja, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal collected authentic Traditions and formed voluminous books of them. Some others like Maqdisi collected fabricated Traditions, and great critics of Hadith coming later tested once more the authenticity of all the Traditions collected by the traditionists mentioned above. Among them, Ibn al-Jawzi judged several of the Traditions included in Musnad of Ibn Hanbal to be either weakly transmitted or even fabricated, although Ibn Jawzi himself belonged to the Hanbali School of law founded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal. However, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani made a new, thorough and detailed examination of those Traditions judged by Ibn al-Jawzi to be weakly transmitted or fabricated and, with the exception of thirteen, proved them all to be authentic. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, who lived in the fifteenth century, scrutinized those Traditions once more and concluded that none of them were fabricated, although a few may be weakly transmitted. Suyuti also reviewed al-Mavdu'at al-Kubra' (A Great Collection of Fabricated Traditions) by Ibn al-Jawzi and sorted out authentic ones among them. Thinking that the rest might not be fabricated either, he wrote al-Laa'li l-Masnu'a (The Artifical Pearls).

Other great traditionists compiled additional compendia to the collections of authentic Traditions. Because of their exactitude, leading traditionists such as Bukhari and Muslim did not include many Traditions in their collections. Hakim compiled a voluminous appendix to Bukhari and Muslim, which is called al-Mustadrak ala' l-Sahihayn (Addendum to The Two Collections of Authentic Traditions). This Addendum was closely reviewed by Hafiz Dhahabi, who was famous for his keen memory.

In later centuries, books were written on maxims, wise sayings or proverbs which have a wide circulation among people and are regarded as Hadith. Sakhawi, in Maqasid al-Hasana, and Ajluni, in Kashf al-Khafa', examined them one by one and explained which of them are truly ahadith and which are not. For example, apart from many authentic Traditions and Qur'anic verses which encourage people to learn, there are sayings widely circulated among people as ahadith such as 'Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave'; or 'Seek knowledge even if it is in China'. Traditionists tested these sayings according to the principles of the science of Hadith and proved that they are not Hadith.

It should be beyond question, after all such tremendous studies and detailed examinations and exacting verifications, that there are no longer fabricated Traditions in the collections of authentic Traditions. And it is sheer prejudice, religious, political and ideological, on the part of orientalists, and betrayal of Islam on the part of some so-called Muslim researchers who act as the spokesmen of orientalists in Muslim countries, to cast doubts on authentic Traditions and the Sunna, which is the second source of Islam and of vital importance for the life of Muslims.



EXAMPLES OF FABRICATED TRADITIONS

Abu Hanifa is, perhaps, the greatest of Muslim jurists, and still shines like a sun in the sky of Islamic jurisprudence. But, the saying attributed to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, that Abu Hanifa is the lamp of my nation, is not a hadith. It must have been fabricated for sectarian considerations.

> Have white cockerels must have been forged by a white cockerel seller, even though we like white cockerels.

Beware of the evil of one to whom you have done good, is another, illogical, saying wrongly attributed to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. You can win the heart of somebody by doing him good. If it were permissible to attribute a saying to the Prophet, I would say: ‘Do good to the one whose evil you fear’, for it is said that ‘man is the slave of the good done to him’.

Rationality is a principle of Islam, but Islam does not depend on rationalism. No one has the right or authority to judge the Qur’an and the Prophet according to the dictates of his own individual reason. For Islam is the collection of the principles established by God, the Owner and Giver of all reasoning and intellect. Therefore, the saying, Discuss among you a saying attributed to me. If that saying is in accordance with truth, confirm it and adopt it as a religious principle. It does not matter whether I have uttered it or not, does not belong to God’s Messenger, it is simply a fabrication.

Another saying wrongly attributed to God’s Messenger is: I was born in the time of the just king. This was fabricated for the purpose of exalting the Persian king Anushirwan. No one can confer honour on God’s Messenger, who himself brought honour to the whole of creation, most particularly to the world we inhabit.

There is another beautiful saying which has a very wide circulation among people as a hadith, although it is really not: Cleanliness comes from belief. The meaning of this saying is true but it was not reported from God’s Messenger through a sound chain of transmission. Instead, God’s Messenger said: Purity (in body and mind and heart) is the half of belief, and ‘al-hamdu li-llah ’(All praise be to God) fills up the balance (where the good deeds of a man will be weighed).91

There is a place near Madina on the way to Makka, called Aqiq. During a journey, God's Messenger ordered: 'Set up your tents at Aqiq'. In Arabic, the word translated here as 'set up your tents' is takhayyamu. Since the points were not used in writing in the early days of Islam, this word was confused with takhattamu, meaning 'wear a ring'. In addittion, 'Aqiq' is, in Arabic, also the name of a precious stone which is cornelian. All this led to a false Tradition, namely, Wear a ring of cornelian, with the addition of because it removes poverty.

Looking at a beautiful face is an act of worship, is another false Tradition, one plainly slanderous against God's Messenger.

As was pointed above, the saying, Seek knowledge even if it is in China, is another of false Traditions. It may have been fabricated in order to encourage people to learn. However, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, has many sayings, and there are several verses in the Qur'an, which urge Muslims to learn or to seek knowledge. For example, the Qur'an declares:

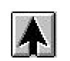
> Only those of His servants fear God who have knowledge. (al-Fatir, 35.28)

Again, it declares:

> Say: 'Are they equal – those who know and those who know not?' (al-Zumar, 39.9)

The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, says:

> Angels spread their wings beneath the feet of those who seek knowledge because they are pleased (with them).



EXAMPLES OF AUTHENTIC TRADITIONS LABELLED AS FABRICATED

1. The attributes of the Messenger in the Torah

Imam Bukhari relates in his Sahih:

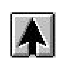
> This is in the Torah: 'O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, a bringer of good tidings and a warner, and a refuge for the unlettered. You are My servant and Messenger. I named you 'the one who places his trust in God'. He is not one harsh and rude, and shouting in streets. He does not repel evil with evil, instead he pardons and forgives. God will not take his soul until He guides the deviant people to believe that there is no god but God, and thereby opens 'blind' eyes and 'deaf' ears and hardened hearts.'

Orientalists and their followers in Muslim world criticize this hadith only because it was reported by 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As, who sometimes narrated from Ka'b ibn al-Akhbar.

First of all, there is nothing in this hadith in contradiction with the characteristics of God's Messenger described in the Qur'an and other Islamic sources. Second, as pointed out in the first volume of this book, despite the distortions and alterations they have been made to undergo over time, the Torah and the Gospels still contain some references to God's Messenger in their present versions. The Qur'an points to this fact in some of its verses like, Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet whom they find written in the Torah and the Gospel with them (al-A'raf, 7.157); This is their like in the

Torah, and their like in the Gospel is this (al-Fath, 48.29). Husayn Jisri, who lived in the first half of this century, found 124 allusions to God's Messenger in the present versions of the Torah and the Gospels. The Gospel of Barnabas explicity mentions the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

Thirdly, Ka'b al-Akhbar was one of the Jews who accepted Islam. Numerous Christians and Jews embraced Islam especially in the early years of the spread of Islam in Africa and Asia. They introduced their previous knowledge into the edifice of Islam, but the part of that knowledge contrary to Islam was either corrected or mostly rejected. Some Companions like 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, Abu Hurayra, Anas ibn Malik and 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As gave ear to the narrations of Ka'b al-Akhbar from the Torah, but it was impossible for them to accept anything contrary to Islam. 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr was among the ascetics of the time, who lived an austere life. He was deeply devoted to Islam and the Prophet, therefore it is incoceivable that he told a lie on behalf of God's Messenger, or fabricated a Tradition. God forbid such a thought!



2. Praying for rain

During a severe famine and drought, the Caliph 'Umar, holding the hand of 'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, prayed: 'O God! While he was alive, we used to take our Prophet as the means to pray to You for rain and You sent down rain. Now we take the uncle of our Prophet as the means to pray to You for rain, so send down to us rain!'

Some, depending on the objection of Jahiz, criticize this Tradition. Dedicated to denial of even most authentic Traditions, although having nothing to do with the science of Tradition, Jahiz, the student of Nazzam, a materialist belonging to the heterodox sect, the Mu'tazila, criticizes this Tradition in his al-Bayan wa l-Tabyin, saying: 'In all the Traditions attributed to 'Umar with regard to praying for rain, there are defects making it difficult for us to accept their authenticity. In some of its versions, 'Umar prayed on the pulpit, in some others, in an open area, and still in others, after a prescribed prayer. Such confusions show that those Traditions are not authentic.'

Hadith is a different, independent discipline requiring profound speciality. Jahiz has nothing considerable to do with the science of Hadith, as does Ibn Abi al-Dunya, who, although a blessed ascetic, criticizes this Tradition in his book containing many mistakes and fabricated Traditions. Imam Ghazali is one of the few great revivers of the Islamic religious sciences and one of the greatest religious guides in the history of Islam, yet if you mention him as a reference in a disputed matter of Hadith, traditionists will laugh at you. A doctor is not asked about engineering, and no one goes to a chemist for medical information or advice.

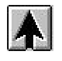
Taking a means to reach God

Second, taking somebody or something as a means to reach God – provided that means should not be regraded as having a part and a substantial effect or attributed to independent agency in creation or in something happening or coming into existence – is not something prohibited by Islam. The Qur'an declares: O you who believe! Fear God and seek a means to Him (al-Ma'ida, 5.35). The Companions usually requested God's Messenger to pray to God on their behalf. Once, during a drought, they asked him to pay for rain. He prayed and it rained so heavily that they had to request him that time to pray for its cessation. He prayed on the pulpit and the people went to their houses in the sun. In the face of that explicit favour of God, the Messenger uttered: I bear witness that God is powerful over everything, and that I am His servant and Messenger.

The Qur'an encouraged the Companions to go to God's Messenger to ask him to pray to God and ask

God's forgiveness for them, emphasizing that his praying is a means of peace and tranquility for them: We sent not ever any Messenger, but that he should be obeyed, by the leave of God. If, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you, and prayed forgiveness of God, and the Messenger had prayed forgiveness for them, they would have found God All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (al-Nisa', 4.64). Pray for them; your prayers are a comfort for them (al-Tawba, 9.103). Once a blind man came to him and complained about his blindness. The Messenger advised him: Take a ritual ablution correctly and perform two rak'ahs of prayer. After the prayer, say: 'O God! I ask You and turn to You for the sake of Your Prophet Muhammad, who is the Prophet of mercy. O Muhammad, I turn to my Lord for your sake for this need of mine to be met. O God, accept his intercession with You on my behalf!' The man did this and recovered his sight.

In conclusion, there can be nothing in the Tradition in question to nullify it.



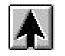
3. Cleaning a bowl licked by a dog

It is reported in almost all of the six most authentic books of Tradition: When a dog has licked a bowl of yours, clean it seven times, the first time with earth, the other six with water.

Some who are unaware of the principles of Hadith and the medical developments in the world criticize the authenticity of this significant Tradition, which, besides being authentic with regard to its chain of transmission, contains a proof for the Prophethood of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. For it was impossible for a man, however great a genius he was, to know fourteen centuries ago the medical principles contained in the Tradition, unless he was a Prophet instructed by God, the All-Knowing.

Being a fact discovered recently, dogs may be carrying the microbes of certain diseases which can be communicated to human beings. Also, the saliva of dogs, like their excrement, may contain substances greatly injurious to human health. As a third point, at the time of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessingss, neither disinfection nor sterilization was known. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, being a Prophet taught by the All-Knowing, recommends earth to clean a bowl licked by a dog. Today we know that earth is a good anstiseptic containing substances like tetracycline.

Some interpreted 'seven times' in the Tradition to mean 'as many times as needed to clean the bowl'. So, the jurists of the Hanafi School regarded it as sufficient to clean the bowl three times.



4. Making a fly in the food dip completely and then taking it out

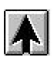
Some contemparary critics, including Maurice Bucaille, a French convert, showed haste in criticizing the following Tradition, reported by Abu Hurayra:

When a fly falls into the bowl of somebody among you, let him dip it completely in the food before taking it out. For there is disease in one of the fly's wings [or sides] and cure in the other.

It is impossible to criticize this Tradition with repect to its chain of transmission. Since it was narrated by completely reliable narrators who were also famous for their memory, uprightness and ability of understanding, it was included by Bukhari, Abu Dawud, Nasa'i, Darimi and Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

Like the previous Tradition, this one too contains proof for the Prophethood of Muhammad, upon him

be peace and blessings. For first of all no one at the time of the Prophet knew that flies carry microbes. Second, when a fly drops in a bowl, it tries to hold one of its wings off the food, so that it can take off again. In which case, it leaves in the food the bacteria it carries in its wing or on its side. But when it is submerged in the food with a slight touch, the tiny bag on the other wing or side (the word janah in the Tradition may mean either wing or side) bursts open to scatter anti-bacteria to kill the germs it has already left. This is one of the latest discoveries in medicine.



5. The 'masjids' worthy of visiting to pray in

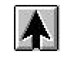
One of the authentic Traditions which, although mentioned in all the authentic books of Tradition, has been critized by those who are planning to destroy the second source of Islam, the Sunna, is the following:

> It is not worth setting out to visit [with the intention of gaining spiritual reward] any mosque other than these three: al-Masjid al-Haram [the Holy Mosque surrounding the Ka'ba], the Mosque of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and al-Masjid al-Aqsa' [the mosque just south of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem].

This Tradition is criticized on the pretext that it was reported by the Companions who made narrations from Ka'b al-Akhbar, or that it sanctifies Masjid al-Aqsa'. This pretext is completely groundless. For Masjid al-Aqsa' does not belong to the Jews. Our Prophet turned to it while praying in Makka. It is the symbol of the dominion of Islam in the world. Our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, was first taken to Mascid al-Aqsa' during his Ascension and led prayer there before the souls of the previous Prophets. God declares in the Qur'an that He blessed the vicinities of this mosque (al-Isra', 17.1). This blessed land surrounding it was first captured by the Prophet Yusha (Joshua) ibn Nun after the death of Moses, upon them be peace. After the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, it was re-captured during the caliphate of 'Umar, may God be pleased with him. One of the greatest commanders of the history of Islam, Salah al-Din Ayyubi, retook it from the control of European crusaders. If God's Messenger included it among the three mosques most blessed and worthy of visiting despite difficulties of travel, it is because God sanctified it.

Despite their sanctity, it is a mistake to assume special kind of prayer in those mosques. As reported by Ibn 'Abbas, a woman promised God to perform prayer in Masjid al-Aqsa' if she recovered from the illness she was suffering. She recovered and, before setting out, called on Maymuna, Mother of Believers, who told her:

Stay here and mind your house, and perform your prayer in the Mosque of the Prophet. For I heard God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, say: 'Prayer performed here is a thousand times better than that performed in any other mosque except the Mosque of the Ka'ba.'

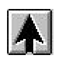


6. Among Muslims, there will always be a group who support the truth

God's Messenger declared:

> Among my community, there will always be a group who support the truth, until the Command of God will come [that is, until the Last Day]. Those who oppose them will not be able to do them any harm.

Despite being recorded in almost all of the authentic books of Tradition and proved by the long history of Islam, this Tradition has also been made subject to unjustifiable criticism. Islam has been able to resist, since the beginning, all attacks. No power in the world has ever been able to destroy it and, after all the concerted efforts of world powers during the last three centruies to efface it from the hearts of Muslims and the surface of the earth, Islam is the only alternative, stronger and fresher than ever, before humanity, for true happiness and prosperity in both worlds. God has preserved Islam through a devoted self-sacrificing community in every period. This community concentrated, in one period, in Damascus, and in another, in Baghdad or Istanbul; once around 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, and then around Imam Ghazali or Imam Rabbani; or while concentrating around Hasan al-Banna in one place, they may have come together, in another, around Badiuzzaman Said Nursi or someone else. Nor will the world be lacking in such groups in the future.



7. Washing hands after getting up

Another Tradition denied by some is this:

> When one of you gets up from bed, he should not put his hand in a bowl [of food or drink] before he has washed it three times. For he does not know where his hands have moved in sleep.

Ahmad Amin and Abu Rayya, under the influence of Goldziher, a notorious Orientalist, ridicule this Tradition, which, in realtiy, contains principles of hygiene. A man may be suffering from allergy or an itch. He might have scratched in sleep that part of his body and germs may have accumulated particularly at the roots of his fingernails. If that man sits at the table without washing his hands, those germs will find a way into, not only his body, but also the bodies of those who eat from the same food at the table.

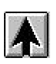
God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never spoke on his own; he always depended on Revelation, whether expilict or implicit, and his Companions, famous for truthfulness, followed him in every step of his and narrated to succeeding generations whatever they received from him. The meticulous, truth-loving traditionists collected the Traditions reaching them through reliable, trustworthy and upright narrators. Among the authentic Traditions, there are some predicting certain future events and scientific developments. Just as none of those prediciting particular future events and scientific developments have so far been proven to be false, so too no one has ever been able to falsify any of the other authentic Traditions, nor will anyone be able to do so in the future.

8. The hadith about 'Jassasa'

The mysteries of creation have not yet been solved; however far mankind advances in this respect, there will always remain some mysteries unsolved. Psychic events or supernormal phenomena like telepathy and second sight, necromancy and other transcendental experiences, all give clues to the existence of worlds or dimensions different from those we live in. As it is possible to find refences to this fact in the Qur'an, some Traditions may also be dealt with from this view-point.

As recorded in authentic books of Tradition, Tamim al-Dari, a Christian convert into Islam, tells of a hairy creature called 'Jassasa' whom he saw in a strange island, and of a gigantic man who lives in a cave and introduces himself as the Dajjal (Anti-Christ).

We cannot deny this Tradition on positivistic premisses, as we cannot deny that the breast of our Prophet was burst open.



9. Moses's warning the Messenger during the Mi'raj against the difficulty of fifty times of the prescribed prayers

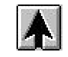
Another similar Tradition which we can deal with partly from the same viewpoint is this:

> God enjoined fifty occasions of prayer a day during the Ascension of the Prophet Mohammad, upon him be peace and blessings. On his return, the Prophet was warned by the Prophet Moses against the difficulty of performing fifty times of prescribed prayer a day, and after repeated appeals, the number was reduced to five.

There are delicate points in the hadith. God is All-Forgiving and although He absolutely knows how many times of prayer a day His servants can endure, He expects His servants to pray to Him for forgiveness and for realization of their goals. Praying or supplication is a mystery of servanthood to God; it is the corner-stone of servanthood. When a servant perceives his poverty, inadequacy and impotence, he comes to depend on the absolute and infinite Richness and Power of his Lord and thus acquires an immeasurable power and inexhaustible source of wealth. A servant should be repeatedly awoken to this fundamental point so that he may not be left to his carnal, evil-commanding and self-conceited self and thereby to incurable, unrecoverable helplessness and destitution.

The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is the last Prophet, with whom Prophethood ended. Therefore, he encompasses all the aspects, all the dimensions, of the mission of Prophethood, and while he confirmed all the previous Prophets on the one hand, Prophethood was perfected through him on the other. If we compare Prophethood to a huge blessed tree, the branches of which spread through all parts of the universe, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, represents this tree with all its aspects and dimensions. His Prophethood is deeply rooted in the mission of the previous Prophets, therefore it is quite natural for him to benefit from his roots. The Prophet Moses came before him centuries ago, so in pursuit of ease for his nation in carrying out their religious duties, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, justifiably acted according to the advice of Moses, upon him be peace. The Prophet Muhammad, although the greatest of all the Prophets, never allowed, as a requirement of his matchless greatness, his followers to regard the others Prophets as inferior to him.

This matter requires further elaboration as there is much to be said on it. However, we must cut it short, because the main theme of this book does not allow further explanation.



THE NUMBER OF THE AUTHENTIC TRADITIONS

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Some biased Orientalists and their blind followers in the Muslim world try to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Sunna on the pretext that some Companions narrate too many Traditions and the number of the Traditions is incredibly great.

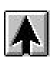
> Are the authentic Traditions more than they could be when the life of the Prophet is considered?

It should, first of all, be noted that Hadith does not comprise only the sayings of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. It includes also his actions ranging from his acts of worship to his manner of sleep, from his style of speech to his likes and dislikes, and his approvals or tacit confirmation of what he witnessed in his Compansions, which was not contrary to the essence of Islam. The Prophet lived 23 years among his Companions as a Messenger of God. He taught them Islam down to its minutest details. He led prayer before them five times a day and every detail of his prayer was recorded, because he ordered them: Pray as you see me praying. He fasted and explained to them everything concerning fasting. He instructed them in the essentials and details of the alms-giving. He performed pilgrimage with them. The books written concerning the essentials of belief and pillars of Islam — the main ways of worship, that is, prayer, fasting, alms-giving and pilgrimage — alone cover tens of volumes. Islam is a universal Divine system, inclusive of everything related to man's life, it has laws and regulations concerning individual and collective life, including all of their spiriutal and material, social, economic, political and military aspects. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, laid down principles related to all these aspects of life. Besides, he warned his Companions many times against deviations; he encouraged them to be deeper and more sensitive and more careful servants of God. He told them about by-gone nations and predicted many future events. As reported by Abu Zayd 'Amr ibn Akhtab, it sometimes happened that he mounted the pulpit after the dawn prayer and addressed the congregation until noon. He continued his addresses after the noon and afternoon prayers and told them about what had happened from the beginning of the world until that time and what would happen from then until the Last Day, including the upheavals of the other world, the grave, the Resurrection, the Great Mustering, balancing of people's deeds, the Last Judgement, the Bridge, and finally Hell and Paradise.

God's Messenger commanded armies many times, heard and tried many cases as a judge, sent envoys and delegations and received them. He signed peace treaties, waged wars and dispatched military expeditions. He laid down rules of hygiene and principles of good conduct and high morality. The number of the miracles he worked amounts to hundreds. As he set an example to be followed by Muslims and because of the vital importance of Hadith in Islam, in addition to his Companions' love of him — to the extent that they preserved the hairs of his beard and imitated him in his every step — his life was recorded from the beginning to the end.

> God's Messenger honoured the universe with his Messengership, His servanthood to God and his exalted, peerless personality.

God’s Messenger honoured the universe with his Messengership, His servanthood to God and his exalted, peerless personality. Being the first to be honoured by witnessing his life, the Companions did not leave to oblivion anything related to him. When they scattered through the lands conquered by Islam, they were first asked by new converts to relate to them Traditions from God’s Messenger, upon him peace and blessings. They were devoted to him so deeply that they remained extra-ordinary faithful to their memories of him.



The devotion of the Companions to the Messenger

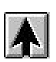
Once during his caliphate, ‘Umar was passing by the house of ‘Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, on his way to the Friday congregational prayer, when a few drops of blood fell onto his robe from the gutter on the roof. He was angered and pulled the gutter to the ground, saying to himself: ‘Who has slaughtered an animal on this roof so that its blood stains my robe on the way to mosque?’ He arrived in the mosque and, after the prayer, warned the congregation: ‘You are doing some wrong things. I was passing by such and such wall on my way here, when some blood dropped onto my robe from the gutter. I pulled the gutter to the ground.’

‘Abbas was upset and sprang to his feet, saying: ‘O ‘Umar, what is that which you did? I personally saw that God’s Messenger put that gutter there in person.’ Now, it was ‘Umar’s turn to be upset. He said to ‘Abbas in great excitement: ‘By God, I will lay my head at the foot of that wall and you will put your foot on my head to put the gutter back in its place. Until you do that, I will not raise my head from the ground’. Such was their devotion and faithfulness to God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

God’s Messenger implanted so great a zeal for learning in the hearts of his followers that the Islamic civilization, under the blessed shadow of which a considerable portion of mankind lived a peaceful life for centuries, was built on the pillars of belief, knowledge, piety and brotherhood. In the lands through which the pure water of Islam flowed, innumerable ‘flowers’ burst open in every field of science and the scent diffused by them exhilarated the world.

The incredible efforts of Muslim scholars

Among those flowers were some, like Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, who read in two or three sessions the whole of the collection of authentic Traditions compiled by Imam Muslim. Imam Nawawi dedicated himself thoroughly to knowledge – teaching and writing – and did not marry during his life in order not to assign any time to anything other than knowledge. Imam Sarakhsi, a great jurist of the Hanafi School, was sentenced by the king to imprisonment in a well. He dictated his monumental compendium of thirty great volumes, al-Mabsut, to his students from memory while in the well. When his students once told him that Imam Shafi‘i, the founder of the Shafi‘i School and regarded by some as the second reviver (mujaddid) of Islam, had in memory three hundred fascicules of Traditions, he answered: ‘He knew the zakat (one fortieth) of what I know’. The works of some scholars such as Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and Imam Suyuti, cover so many volumes that when divided among the days of their lives, about twenty pages fall on each day. That is, each wrote twenty pages every day. We are unable to study or even read in a whole life what each wrote during his life.

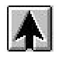


Who is a faqih (expert jurist in Islamic law)?

Anas ibn Sirin, the son of Muhammad ibn Sirin, who was one of the greatest scholars of the first generation after the Companions, says: ‘When I arrived in Kufa, 4000 people were attending the Hadith courses in mosques. Among them 400 were experts in Islamic jurisprudence.’ In order to perceive the meaning of being an expert in Islamic jurisprudence, it is enough to relate that Ahmad ibn Hanbal, whose Musnad contains 40 thousand Traditions chosen from among one million Traditions in circulation, was not admitted as an expert jurist by some. He was not regarded to be of the same standing in Islamic jurisprudence as Abu Hanifa, Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Shafi‘i, Imam Malik, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari and the like. However impossible it is not to admit that great figure of Islamic religious sciences as an expert jurist, it is a means to understand the merit and calibre of an expert jurist in Islam to relate that some objected to his being counted among the expert jurists.

The atmosphere was propitious for the development of sciences

The general atmosphere was extremely propitious for the development of sciences, especially the science of Tradition (Hadith). Every Muslim, every new convert showed a great zeal for learning Islam and recognizing its Holy Prophet fully. People had great potential and aptitude for literature and languages. As everybody knows, poetry was very widespread during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance. The Qur’an came, first of all, as an absolute and incomparable miracle of language and all the literary geniuses were prostrate with admiration before its eloquence. Almost all of those geniuses gave up poetry after their conversion and dedicated themselves to the Qur’an and the Hadith. Among them, Hansa, a woman poet, became so deeply devoted to the cause of Islam that when her four sons were martyred in the Battle of Qadisiyyah, she praised God, saying: ‘O God, You gave me four sons, all of whom I have sacrificed in the way of Your Beloved (Prophet). Praise be to You, to the number of thousands.’ That blessed woman found eight mistakes with respect to either language or poetry in a stanza of Hassan ibn Thabit, who was a famous poet among the Companions. After the revelation of the Qur’an, Hansa gave up poetry and became completely absorbed in the Qur’an and the Hadith.

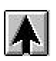


Geniuses of memory

Life was quite simple in the desert. This enabled people to commit themselves to Islamic sciences. Also, they had very keen memories. For example, when God’s Messenger asked him to learn the Hebrew language, Zayd ibn Thabit accomplished this within a couple of weeks to the degree of reading and writing letters in it. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Qatada ibn Diama, Sha‘bi, Ibrahim ibn Yazid al-Nakha’i, Imam Shafi‘i and many others were among those who publicly pronounced that they never forgot even a single word once they committed it to memory. It was enough for many of them to read or hear something only once in order to memorize it.

When Imam Bukhari arrived in Baghdad, ten leading persons in Islamic sciences tested his knowledge of Hadith and keenness of memory. Each of them recited ten Traditions, changing either the order of the narrators in a chain of transmission or the chains with each other. For example, the famous Tradition, Actions are judged according to intentions... is narrated by Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Ansari, from Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Taymi, who narrates it from Alqama ibn Waqqas al-Laysi, who narrates it from ‘Umar ibn al-Hattab, the second Caliph. That is, the chain of transmission of this hadith is composed of ‘Umar, Alqama, Ibrahim al-Taymi and Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Ansari, respectively. They changed this chain with that of another hadith or changed the order of the narrators, or they substituted others for one or two names in the chain. A hundred Traditions were recited to Bukhari in this way. After the recitation of the hundredth, Imam Bukhari corrected the chains one by one from memory and repeated each Tradition with its own sound chain of transmission. At last, the scholars who tested him admitted his capacity of learning and knowledge of Hadith. Ibn Khuzayma acknowledged particularly: ‘Neither this earth, nor that heaven has witnessed a second person as knowledgeable as you in this field.’

Imam Bukhari never sold knowledge for worldly benefits. When the then ruler of Bukhara invited him to his palace to teach his children, the great Imam refused him, saying: 'Knowledge cannot be debased as to be taken to a ruler. If the ruler desired knowledge, he should personally come to knowledge.' In response, the ruler requested him to assign one day of the week to his children. Bukhari refused again, saying: 'I am busy with teaching the Umma of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. So, I cannot waste my time in teaching your children'. The ruler exiled him, and this greatest figure in the science of Hadith spent his last days in exile.



THE TRADITIONS WERE RECORDED IN THE TIME OF THE PROPHET HIMSELF

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The first written compilations of Traditions were made during the caliphate of ‘Umar ibn ‘Ad al-‘Aziz, at the beginning of the second century of Hijra. However, though all the Traditions that would be collected and arranged in book form were in oral circulation, most of them had already been recorded in individual collections either by some Companions or their students.

The overwhelming majority of the ‘Arabs were unlettered. When the Qur’an began to be revealed, a desire to learn to read and write was aroused in them. The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, encouraged them to do so; it is worthy of note that among the prisoners of war taken at the Battle of Badr those who were literate were released after each taught ten Muslims how to read and write. It should also be kept in mind that the first Revelation was the command: Read, in the name of your Lord, Who has created. He created man from a clot suspended (on the wall of the womb). Read, Your Lord is the All-Munificent, Who taught (to write) with the pen. He taught man what he had not known (al-‘Alaq, 96.1-5).

Despite the importance attached to knowledge and learning, in the early period of his Messengership, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, did not allow his Companions to write down what they heard from him. For example, as related in the Sahih al-Muslim, he said: Do not write anything belonging to me. Whoever has written something received from me outside the Qur’an let him destroy it. This was because it was quite possible that the Companions might confuse the Qur’anic verses with the sayings of the Prophet. The Qur’anic Revelations were coming and recorded on sheets or on fragments of leather or wood. Since the Qur’an was continuing to be revealed, it had not yet been arranged as a complete book. Therefore, God’s Messenger did not want, as a necessary precaution, his sayings to be written down beside the Qur’anic verses. He feared lest people should be unable to distinguish the Qur’an from his sayings and ultimately might go to perdition, as is explicit in the following hadith.

Abu Hurayra narrates:

> God’s Messenger once came near us while some friends were writing down what they had heard from him. He asked what they were writing. ‘We are writing what we heard from you’, they answered. The Messenger warned: ‘Do you know that the communities preceding you went astray because they wrote down from others beside the Book of God.’

Another point worthy of note in this connection is that, as most of the Qur’anic Revelations came on different occasions and there are in it concise and sometimes – seemingly – ambiguous verses besides the clear and detailed ones, and the allegorical verses beside the explicit and incontrovertible ones, and also, during an evolving movement leading to the establishment of a purely Islamic community, some commandments came to replace earlier ones, so too God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, spoke on different particular occasions, and to persons of different temperaments and levels of understanding, and also to new converts as well as to those who had accepted Islam long before. For example, when a new convert asked him what the best deed was, he answered that it was belief

and performing the five prescribed prayers. When the same question was asked when Jihad had priority, the answer came that the best deed was Jihad in the way of God. Further, since his Message included all times and peoples until the Last Day, he frequently resorted to allegories, similes, parables and metaphors. All these factors, besides many others, might have led the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, to forbid certain individuals from writing down his sayings. If everyone had written down or narrated whatever he heard from or witnessed in God's Messenger, without being able to distinguish between the real and metaphorical, between the concrete and the abstract, between the abrogated and the abrogating, between the general and the particular and occasional, it would have caused great confusions and misunderstandings. It is because of the same fear and concern that 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, sometimes warned people against careless narration of the Prophetic Traditions.

However, there are many Traditions which state that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, did allow his Companions to write down his sayings. A time came when the Companions attained the intellectual and spiritual maturity to distinguish between the Qur'an and Hadith, giving to each the attention and importance necessary and particular to each, and to understand the circumstances relevant to each Tradition, and God's Messenger then encouraged them to write down his Traditions.

Abu Hurayra relates:

> Among the Companions there is no one, except 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As, having as many Traditions as I do. I did not use to write down the sayings of the Prophet, but 'Abdullah did.

"Write down, for, I swear by Him in Whose hand is my life, nothing comes out from this except truth."

As reported from himself, 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr used to write down whatever he heard from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Some people said to him: 'You are writing down everything coming from the mouth of God's Messenger. The Messenger is a human being. There are times when he is angered and times when he is pleased.' 'Abdullah referred the matter to God's Messenger, who answered him, pointing to his mouth: Write down, for, I swear by Him in Whose hand is my life, nothing comes out from this except truth.

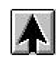
Whether angered or pleased, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, never spoke on his own; out of personal caprice or whim. Whatever he spoke, is a Revelation [explicit or implicit] revealed (al-Najm, 53.4). Every word and action of his has some bearing on the religion of Islam. Therefore, his words and actions had to be recorded. The Companions did this holy task, either by committing them to memory or writing them down. There is not, in the world, another person, next to God's Messenger, whose life is known down to its minutest details, and has been handed down through generations so accurately. This is why we should feel indebted to the Companions and the two or three generations after them, including the great traditionists especially, who recorded his words and actions and transmitted them to future generations.

A man came to God's Messenger and complained about his memory, saying: 'O Messenger of God: We hear many things from you. But most of them slip our minds because we cannot memorize them'. God's Messenger replied: Ask your right hand for help. The Messenger meant that he should write down what he heard.

When Rafi' ibn Khadij asked God's Messenger whether they could write what they heard from him, the answer came: Write, no harm!

As recorded in the Sunan of al-Darimi, God's Messenger advised: Record knowledge by writing.

During the conquest of Makka, God's Messenger gave a sermon. A man from the Yemen, named Abu Shah, stood up and said: 'O God's Messenger! Please write down these [words] for me!' The Messenger ordered: Write down for Abu Shah!



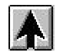
Compilation of the Traditions

'Ali, the fourth Caliph, carried, attached to his sword, a sheet in which were written the commandments about the blood money to compensate for injuries and the sanctification of Madina and some other matters. Ibn 'Abbas left behind a camel-load of books, which mostly contain what he had heard from God's Messenger and other Companions. God's Messenger sent a letter to 'Amr ibn Hazm, which contained commandments about the blood money for murders and injuries and the law of retaliation. This letter was handed down to his great grandson, Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad. Likewise, a scroll transferred from God's Messenger to Abu Rafi' was handed down to Abu Bakr ibn 'Abd Al-Rahman ibn Harith, belonging to the first generation after the Companions. One of the leading scholars of this generation, Mujahid ibn Jabr, saw the compilation of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, called al-Sahifat al-Sadiqa. Ibn al-Athir, a renowned historian, writes that this compilation contained around a thousand Traditions. Half of them were recorded in authentic books of Tradition, with the chain, from 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb, from his father, from his grandfather respectively.

Like Ibn 'Abbas, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari left behind a voluminous book containing the sayings he had heard from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Al-Sahifat al-Sahiha is another of the important sources of Hadith from that earliest period. Hammam ibn Munabbih, the compiler of that Sahifa, followed Abu Hurayra whenever he went and wrote down the Prophetic sayings reported by him. This compilation has recently been published by Muhammad Hamidullah, and proven, through carbon dating, to belong to the period thirteen centuries ago. Almost all of the Traditions contained in it can be found either in Musnad ibn Hanbal or the Sahihayn, Bukhari and Muslim.

After these first simple compilations, the Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, who reigned between 99-101 after the Hijra, decided all the authentic Traditions whether in oral or written circulation, should be compiled into books systematically. He ordered the governor of Madina, Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn Hazm, to supervise this task. Muhammad ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, renowned for his profound learning and very keen intelligence, undertook the task, and acquired the honour of being the first 'official' compiler of Traditions.

This movement of 'official' compilation launched by 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz did not become restricted to the activities of Imam ibn Shihab al-Zuhri in Madina. The same task was performed by 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Jurayj in Makka. Sa'id ibn Abi 'Aruba in Iraq, Awza'i in Damascus, Zayd ibn Qudama and Sufyan al-Thawri in Kufa, Hammad ibn Salama in Basra and 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak in Khorasan.

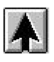


Classification of the compiled Traditions

This period of official and systematic compilation was followed by the period of classification of the compiled Traditions, done by eminent traditionists such as Abu Dawud al-Tayalisi, Musaddad ibn Musarhad, al-Humaydi and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who brought out their Musnads, and also 'Abd al-Razzaq ibn Hammam and others who formed their Musannafs. Ibn Abi Dhi'b and Imam Malik put the title of al-Muwatta' to their books. Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan and Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Ansari should also be mentioned among the pre-eminent figures of this period.

The period of the greatest Traditionists

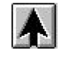
Then came the period of the greatest traditionists of the history of Islam. The authors of the six world-famous books of Tradition, namely Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Nasa'i, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Maja, appeared in this period. These most celebrated persons and some others almost as illustrious as them like Yahya ibn Ma'in, included in their collections the most authentic Traditions which they judged according to the most strict criteria. For example, in order to receive a hadith, Imam Bukhari went to a man who was renowned for his reliability and piety. Nevertheless, he saw him hold his hat towards his animal as if there were something in it to eat, to entice it towards himself. Bukhari asked the man whether there was something in the hat to feed the animal. The man said, 'No!'. Bukhari left the man without taking the hadith from him, because, in his view, one who could deceive an animal in this way might also deceive people. Such were the exacting criteria applied when judging the reliability of narrators.



The critics of the books of Traditions

In short, the Prophetic Traditions were either written down or memorized during the time of the Companions. When the first Islamic century ended, they had a wide circulation, in oral or written form. Upon the order of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, eminent scholars undertook the first 'official' compilation of ahadith in different centres. The authentic Traditions were distinguished from fabricated ones with utmost care and according to most sensitive criteria. Then came the period of classification. It was followed by the most systematic and accurate compilation or collection accomplished by the pre-eminent and most famous figures of the science of Hadith. Later, new authentic books of Traditions were added to them. Also, the illustrious critics of Tradition such as ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Ibn Abd al-Barr, Dhahabi, Ibn al-Jawzi and Zayn al-Din al-Iraqi reviewed all the Traditions and brought about large compendiums about narrators.

The Sunna of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, has thus been handed down to us through most reliable channels. No one has the right to cast doubt upon this second source of Islam, which approaches the Qur'an in purity, authenticity and unquestionability.



THE BLESSED COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET

THE BLESSED COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET

The Blessed Companions of God's Messenger

The Companions of God's Messenger constitute the first pure and blessed channel through which the Qur'an and the Sunna were transmitted to later generations. God is the All-Trustworthy and Inspirer of Trust; the Archangel Gabriel is also trustworthy. The Qur'an describes the Archangel as trustworthy and as one, obeyed and having power (al-Takwir, 20.21). As everybody knows, the Prophet Muhammad was renowned, first of all, for his trustworthiness. Having been revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel, the Qur'an was entrusted to the Companions, who memorized it, recorded it and transmitted it to the following generations. This blessed community, which was praised in the Torah and Gospel, were the living embodiment of almost all laudable virtues and sought nothing but the good pleasure of God; they absorbed, besides the Qur'an, the Sunna of the Prophet and lived disciplined lives strictly in accordance with the example of the Prophet, and represented and transmitted it without any disloyalty to it.

Who is a Companion and the ranks of the Companions

Scholars are agreed upon the definition of Companionship by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani: 'A Companion is the believer who saw and heard God's Messenger at least once and died as a believer'. Even though some scholars have stipulated that, in order to be ranked as a Companion, a believer should have lived in the company of God's Messenger for one or even two years, the majority of the scholars regarded it as enough to have been present in the radiant atmosphere of the Messenger long enough to have derived some benefit from it.

It goes without saying that the Companions are not equal to each other in rank or greatness. Some of them believed in God's Messenger at the very outset of his mission, and conversions continued until his saying farewell to the world. The Qur'an grades them according to precedence in belief and according to conversion before the conquest of Makka and after it (al-Tawba, 9.100; al-Hadid, 57.10). The same gradation was also made by God's Messenger himself. For example, he reproached Khalid for offending 'Ammar, saying: Do not trouble my Companions! In the same way, he frowned at 'Umar, when he annoyed Abu Bakr, and said: Why do you not leave my Companions to me! Abu Bakr believed in me at a time when all of you denied me. Abu Bakr knelt down and explained: 'O Messenger of God! It was my fault!'

The Companions were divided into twelve ranks by Hakim al-Nisaburi133 and this division was accepted by the majority of scholars:

1. The four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, namely Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and ‘Ali, and the rest of the ten to whom Paradise was promised while alive. They are Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, Abu ‘Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah, ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf, Talha ibn ‘Ubayd Allah, Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas and Sa‘id ibn Zayd, may God be pleased with them all.

2. Those who believed prior to ‘Umar’s conversion and frequently gathered together secretly in the house of Arqam to listen to God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

3. Those who migrated to Abyssinia.

4. The Helpers (Ansar) who were present at the first ceremony of taking the oath of allegiance to God’s Messsenger at al-‘Aqaba.

5. The Helpers who took the oath of allegiance to the Messenger at al-‘Aqaba, the following year.

6. The first Emigrants who joined God’s Messenger before his arrival in Madina during the Emigration.

7. The Companions who participated in the Battle of Badr.

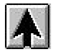
8. Those who emigrated to Madina during the period between the Battle of Badr and the Treaty of Hudaybiya.

9. The Companions who took the oath of allegiance to God’s Messenger under a tree during the expedition of Hudaybiya.

10. Those who converted and emigrated to Madina after the Treaty of Hudaybiya.

11. Those who became Muslims after the conquest of Makka.

12. The children who saw God’s Messenger either during the conquest of Makka or during the Farewell Pilgrimage, or in any other place and on different occasions.



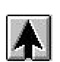
The greatness of the Companions

The Muslim scholars of the highest rank, whose minds are enlightened by scientific knowledge and whose souls are illumined by religious knowledge and practice, are agreed that the Prophets are the greatest among humankind. The second rank in greatness belongs to the Companions of the Last Prophet, who is the greatest of the Prophets. Although there may be some among the Companions who are of the same rank as previous Prophets in some one or other particular virtue, no one can be equal to a Prophet in general terms. Likewise, some of the greatest saints or scholars can compete with the Companions, or even there may be some among them who excel the Companions in some particular virtues, a Companion of even the lowest rank like Wahshi, is still greater, in general terms, than all those who came after the Companions. This is what all Muslim scholars, whether traditionists or theologians or saints, are unanimously agreed upon.

The factors in the greatness of Companionship

Relation to Messengership

Prophethood is greater than sainthood and Messengership is greater than Prophethod. Every Prophet is a saint but no saint is a Prophet. Although every Messenger is a Prophet, every Prophet is not a Messenger at the same time. God's Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is the last and the greatest of both the Prophets and Messengers. The Companions are related directly to the Messengership of God's Messenger; they are connected with him on account of his mission of Messengership. All those who came after the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, however great they may be, are connected with him on account of sainthood, not Messengership and Prophethood. Therefore, a Companion is greater than a saint to the degree that Messengership is greater than sainthood; the distance between them is impossible to cover.



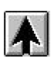
The benefits of company with the Messenger

Nothing can compare with the enlightenment and spiritual exhilaration to be gained from the actual presence or company of a Prophet. However much you read the writings of an intellectual, especially a spiritual, master, you cannot derive from them as much benefit or enlightenment as he gives to his direct audience. It is for this reason that the Companions, particularly those who were in his company most often and from the very beginning, benefited from him so much that they were elevated from the rank of being crude, ignorant and savage desert men to the rank of being the religious, intellectual, spiritual and moral guides of humanity until the Last Day.

In order to be a Companion, one should be able to go back to the Makka or Madina of the seventh century, listen to God's Messenger attentively and observe him speaking, walking, eating, fighting, praying, prostrating before God, and so on. Since this is impossible for anybody after the Prophet, no one can attain to the rank of the Companions, who were endowed with Divine colouring in the presence of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

Truthfulness

Islam is based on truthfulness and nothing is as incompatible with Islam as lying. The Companions were first to embrace Islam in its original, pristine purity and being a Muslim meant for them abandoning all their previous vices, and being purified in the radiant atmosphere of Divine Revelation and becoming the embodiment of Islam. They would rather die than tell a single lie. God's Messenger once declared that if apostasy is as repugnant to a man as entering fire, then that man must have tasted the pleasure of belief. The Companions tasted the pleasure of believing and being sincere Muslims, so it was impossible for them to turn to lying, which for them was an offence of almost the same gravity as apostasy. However, it is difficult for us to understand this point fully, seeing that we live in a time when lying and deceit have come to be regarded as skills and almost all virtues have come to be replaced by vices.



The atmosphere created by Revelation

The Companions were honoured with being the first to receive the Divine Messages through the Prophet. Every day came to them with original messages and every day they were invited to a new 'Divine table', full of ever-fresh 'fruits' of Paradise. Every passing day they experienced radical changes in their lives and were elevated higher to the Presence of God, and every day increased them in belief and conviction. They found themselves in the verses of the Qur'an revealed one after the other and

enjoyed the possibility of learning directly whether God approved their actions at any time or place. For example, when the verse,

> Those who are with him are hard against the unbelievers, merciful one to another. You see them bowing, prostrating, seeking blessing from God and good pleasure. Their mark is on their faces, the trace of prostration. (al-Fath, 48.29)

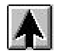
was revealed, and whenever and wherever it was recited, eyes were turned to, primarily, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and ‘Ali, who were famous for always being with God’s Messenger from the very beginning, for hardness against the unbelievers, for being merciful to their Muslim brothers, and for frequent and long bowing and prostration before God, seeking His good pleasure. Likewise, when the verse,

> Among the believers are men who were true to their covenant with God; some of them have fulfilled their vow by death, and some are still awaiting, and they have not changed in the least. (al-Ahzab, 33.23)

was recited, everyone remembered the martyrs of Uhud, Hamza, Anas ibn Nadr and ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh primarily, and the others who had promised God to give their lives willingly in His Way. While God explicitly mentioned the name of Zayd ibn Haritha in the verse,

> So when Zayd had accomplished what he would of her ... (al-Ahzab, 33.37)

He declared in another verse (al-Fath, 48,18) that He was well pleased with the believers when they swore fealty to God’s Messenger under a tree during the expedition of Hudaybiya. In such a blessed, pure and radiant atmosphere, the Companions practised Islam in its original fullness, its pristine purity, based on deep perception, profound insight and knowledge of God. So, even an ordinary believer who is aware of the meaning of belief and connection with God, and who is trying to practise Islam sincerely, can grasp some glimpse of the purity of the first channel through which the Sunna of the Prophet was transmitted to the next generation.



The difficulty of the circumstances

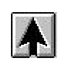
The reward of a deed changes according to the circumstances in which it is done and the purity of intention in the heart of its doer. Endeavouring in the way of God, for example, in severe circumstances such as fear, threats and shortage of necessary equipment, and purely for the sake of God without aiming at any worldly profit, is much more rewarding than the same action performed in a free and promising atmosphere.

The Companions accepted and defended the religion of God in the severest circumstances of all times. The opposition was extremely inflexible and unpitying. As Abu Bakr is reported in Musamarat al-Abrar by Muhyi al-Din ibn al-‘Arabi, to have told ‘Ali after the death of the Prophet, the early Companions did not dare to go out except at the risk of their lives. They always feared that a dagger would be thrust at them from the front or from behind. Only God knows how many times they were insulted, beaten and tortured. Especially the weak and slaves such as Bilal, ‘Ammar, and Suhayb were tortued almost to death and the young, like Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas and Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr, were beaten, boycotted and imprisoned by their families. None of them ever thought of renouncing their religion, nor did they oppose God’s Messenger in any of his commands. They forsook for the sake of God everything they had; they left their homes, their native lands and belongings and emigrated to another land. The believers of Madina welcomed them enthusiastically and protected them; they shared with them everything they had. They fulfilled their covenant with God willingly; sold their goods and souls to God

in exchange for belief and Paradise, and never broke their word. This gained them so high a rank in the view of God that no one can attain it until the Last Day.

The severity of circumstances, along with other factors mentioned and unmentioned, made the Companions' belief strong and firm beyond compare. To cite an example, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, once entered the mosque and saw Harith ibn Malik sleeping there. He woke him up. Harith asked: 'May my father and mother be sacrificed for your sake, O Messenger of God! I am ready to carry out your orders!' God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, asked him how he had spent the night. Harith answered: 'I have spent the night as a true believer.' The Messenger asked again: Everything which is true must have a truth (proving it). What is the truth of your belief? Harith replied: 'I fasted during the day, and prayed to my Lord in utmost sincerity all night long. Now I am in a state as if I were seeing the Throne of my God and the recreation of the people of Paradise in Paradise'. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, concluded: You have become an embodiment of belief.

The Companions became so near to God that 'God was their eyes with which they saw, their ears with which they heard, their tongues with which they spoke and their hands with which they held.'



The Companions in the Qur'an

Ibn Hazm voices the opinion of many leading scholars: 'All of the Companions will enter Paradise'. It is possible to find proofs in the Qur'an testifying to the truth of this opinion.

The Qur'an describes the Companions in the last verse of the sura al-Fath, as follows:

> Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are hard against the unbelievers [they are implacable before them], merciful one to another. [They kept so long vigils that] you see them bowing, prostrating, seeking blessing, bounty (of forgiveness and Paradise) and good pleasure (of God). Their mark is on their faces, the trace of prostration. That is their likeness in the Torah, and their likeness in the Gospel: as a seed that puts forth its shoot, and strengthens it, and it grows strong and rises straight upon its stalk, pleasing the sowers, that through them it may enrage the unbelievers. God has promised those of them who believe and do deeds of righteousness forgiveness and a mighty wage [He will reward them in Paradise with the things that neither eyes will ever have seen nor ears heard].

The Qur'an again, describes them:

> The Outstrippers, the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in good-doing – God is well- pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him; and He has prepared for them gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to dwell forever; that is the mighty triumph. (al-Tawba, 9.100)

Abu Hurayra never missed the discourse of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. He was always with him and stayed in the antechamber of the Prophet's Mosque. He suffered hunger almost all the time. Once he went to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and told him that he had eaten nothing for days. Abu Talha took him as a guest but unfortunately there was little in his house to eat. However, he said to his wife, Umm Sulaym, 'Get the children to sleep early at night, and put on the table whatever is in the house to eat. When we sit at the table, put out the candle pretending to make its light brighter. No one sees in the dark whether one is really eating or not. I will act as if I am eating, and thus our guest can satisfy his hunger.'

After the dawn prayer, God's Messenger turned to them and smiled, saying: What did you do at that night? This verse was revealed concerning you:

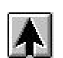
> Those who made their dwelling in the abode [Madina], and in belief, before them [the Emigrants] love whoever has emigrated to them, not finding in their breasts any need for what they have been given, and preferring others above themselves, even though poverty be their portion. Whoever is guarded against the avarice of his own soul, those – they are the prosperous. (al-Hashr, 59.9)

Again, we read in the Qur'an concerning the Companions:

> God was well-pleased with the believers when they were swearing fealty to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down peace, calm and tranquillity upon them, and rewarded them with a nigh victory. (al-Fath, 48.18)

The Companions swore many oaths of allegiance to God's Messenger that they would do their utmost to protect him and carry, by God's Will, Islam to ultimate victory. They kept their promise at the cost of all their belongings and lives. Most of them were martyred in the battles either during the life of the Prophet himself or in conveying Islam as far as possible during the reigns of succeeding Caliphs. It is still possible to find in almost every part of Muslim lands tombs where several Companions are buried. Also, they brought up numerous scholars in the fields of religious knowledge – jurisprudence, Tradition, Qur'-anic interpretation, and also in social sciences like history and the biography of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. In the words of the Qur'an,

> Among the believers are men who were true to their covenant with God; some of them have fulfilled their vow by death, and some are still awaiting, and they have not changed in the least. (al-Ahzab, 33.23)



The Companions in Hadith

Besides the Qur'an, the Prophet himself, upon him be peace and blessings, praised the Companions and warned Muslims against attacks and insulting words about them. For example:

Bukhari, Muslim and other traditionists relate from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that God's Messenger warned:

> Do not curse my Companions! Do not curse my Companions! I swear by Him in Whose hand my life is that, even if one among you had as much gold as Mount Uhud and spent it in the way of God, this would not be equal in reward to a few handfuls of them or even to half of that.

This is certainly so because they accepted Islam and preached and protected it when circumstances were most severe. Besides, according to the rule 'the cause is like the doer', the reward gained by all Muslims so far and yet to come until the Last Day has been, and will be, added to the record of the Companions, without, of course, diminishing anything from the reward of the doers themselves. Had it not been for the efforts of the Companions to spread Islam, to convey it to the peoples of the world, no one could have the possibility of knowing of Islam, and, therefore, being Muslim. So, all the Muslims coming after the Companions should feel indebted to the Companions and, rather than thinking of criticizing them, should pray for them as the Qur'an teaches us to:

> As for those who came after them, they say, Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in belief, and put not into our hearts any rancour towards those who believe. Our Lord, surely

> You are the All-Gentle, the All-Compassionate. (al-Hashr, 59.10)

Tirmidhi and Ibn Hibban quote 'Abdullah ibn Mughaffal that God's Messenger warned:

> Oh God, Oh God! Refrain from using bad language about my Companions! Oh God, Oh God! Refrain from using bad language about my Companions! Do not make them the target of your attacks after me! Whoever loves them, loves them on account of his love of me; whoever hates them, hates them on account of his hatred of me. He who hurts them, has hurt me, and he who hurts me, has hurt God, he who hurts God, God will punish him.

Imam Muslim relates in his Sahih that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared:

> The stars are means of security for the heaven, [that is, the heaven is maintained because of the delicate order among the stars]. When the stars are scattered [when that order collapses], what was promised for the heaven befalls it [i.e. the final destruction of the universe]. I am the means of security for my Companions [my Companions will continue to live in peace and security as long as I am alive]. When I leave the world, what was promised for my Companions will befall them. My Companions are means of security for my nation (Ummah). When my Companions leave the world, what was promised for my Umma will befall them [they will be exposed to many misfortunes and calamities].

As recorded in authentic books of Tradition, including Bukhari and Muslim, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared:

> The best of people are those living in my time. Then come those who follow them, and then come those who follow them. Those will be followed by a generation whose witness is sometimes true, sometimes false.

The time of the Companions and the two succeeding generations was the time of truthfulness. People of great righteousness and scholars of utmost exactitude appeared among those first three generations of Islam. Among the later generations were many who told lies and perjured themselves in order to reinforce false beliefs or for worldly aims. It was natural for liars, for members of heterodox sects (as it is for biased Orientalists and their blind followers in the Muslim world), to lie against the Companions and the pure Imams of the two generations succeeding them. For the Companions and those Imams were strongholds of Islam, and strengthened its pillars.

In his Hilyat al-Awliya', Abu Nu'aym quotes 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar as saying:

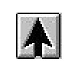
> Whoever desires to follow a straight path, should follow the path of those who passed away. They are the Companions of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. They are the best among his Ummah, the purest in heart, the deepest in knowledge, and the farthest from false display of piety. They are a community whom God chose for the company of His Prophet and the conveyance of His religion. Try to be like them in conduct and follow their way. They are the Companions of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. I swear by God, the Lord of the Ka'ba, that they were on true guidance.

As recorded by Tabarani and Ibn al-Athir, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, who was among the first to embrace Islam in Makka and sent to Kufa as a teacher by 'Umar, said:

> God looked at the hearts of His true servants and chose Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, to send to His creatures as a Messenger. Then, He looked at the hearts of people and chose his Companions as the helpers of His religion and the viziers of His Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

Ibn Mas‘ud also said concerning the Companions.

> You may excel the Companions of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in fasting, praying and in striving to worship God better. Yet they are better than you. For they give no heed to the world and are most desirous of the Hereafter.



THE COMPANIONS WHO NARRATED MORE TRADITIONS THAN THE OTHERS

THE COMPANIONS WHO NARRATED MORE TRADITIONS THAN THE OTHERS

God Almighty created people with different dispositions and potentials so that human social life may be maintained through mutual help and division of labour. Therefore, as in every community, there were among the Companions, besides good farmers and successful tradesmen or businessmen, those who were inclined to learning or to commanding armies, or who were endowed with administrative ability. Some of them, especially those who were called Ashab al-Suffa (those who stayed in the antechamber of the Mosque of the Prophet) never missed the teaching of God's Messenger and tried to memorize his every word. These Companions later narrated to people whatever they heard from, or witnessed in, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Fortunately, they outlived the others by God's Will and, together with 'A'isha, Mother of Believers, may God be pleased with her, constituted the first, golden channel through which the Sunna of the Prophet was handed down to future generations. The following is a brief description of their characters and lives:

ABU HURAYRA, may God be pleased with him

Abu Hurayra was from the tribe of Daws in the Yemen. He became a Muslim in the early days of the seventh year of Hijra at the hands of Tufayl ibn 'Amr, the chief of his tribe.

When Abu Hurayra emigrated to Madina, God's Messenger was on the campaign of Khaybar. He joined him in Khaybar. God's Messenger changed his name, 'Abd al-Shams, into 'Abd al-Rahman, saying: A man is not the slave of either the sun or moon.

Abu Hurayra was very poor and modest. One day God's Messenger saw him with a cat in his arms and nicknamed him Abu Hirr, meaning the father or owner of a cat, and people began to call him Abu Hurayra. However, he liked to be called Abu Hirr, since this title was given to him by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

Abu Hurayra lived together with his mother and desired very much that his mother too should be a

Muslim. One day he went to God's Messenger and asked him to pray for the conversion of his mother. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, stretched out his arms to pray and, before he lowered them, Abu Hurayra ran to his house. He believed that the prayer of the Messenger would not be rejected. When he arrived home, his mother stopped him at the door. She was doing the total ritual ablution. After the ablution, she opened the door and proclaimed the confession of faith: There is no deity but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

After his mother's conversion, Abu Hurayra requested God's Messenger to pray to God that believers should love him and his mother. God's Messenger did so. Therefore, love of Abu Hurayra is a mark of belief. Believers love him.

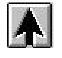


Abu Hurayra had an extraordinarily keen memory

Abu Hurayra had an extraordinarily keen memory. He slept in the first third of night; in the second third he prayed and did his daily supererogatory recitations and, in the last third he went over the Traditions he had memorized in order never to forget them.

The Messenger's prayer for Abu Hurayra

Abu Hurayra had in memory more than five thousand Traditions. He always attended the discourses of God's Messenger and had a great inclination to learn his Traditions. Also, he was a lover of knowledge. One day, he was praying in the mosque, 'O God, grant me knowledge I will never forget', when God's Messenger heard him and said, O God, Amen! Again, one day he went to the Messenger and said, 'O Messenger of God! I want to not forget anything I hear from you.' The Messenger asked him to take off his cloak and spread it on the ground, which Abu Hurayra did. The Messenger then prayed and emptied his hands out onto the cloak as if he had filled them with something from the Unseen. Then, he ordered Abu Hurayra to fold up the cloak again and to hold it to his breast, which he did. After narrating this incident, Abu Hurayra used to say: 'I folded it up again and held it to my breast. I swear by God that [since then] I have not forgotten anything I heard from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.'



Abu Hurayra endured all hardships of the world with becoming patience for the sake of Hadith

Abu Hurayra paid no heed to the world. He usually fasted three or four days successively without eating anything because of poverty. Sometimes he writhed with hunger on the ground and said to those passing by, 'Istaqra'tuka', which means both 'Will you not recite to me some Qur'an?' and 'Will you not feed me?' Ja'far Tayyar understood him better than anybody else and took him as a guest. Abu Hurayra endured all such hardships with becoming patience for the sake of Hadith. To those who sometimes warned him, saying, 'You are narrating too many Traditions', he used to reply in utmost sincerity: 'While my Emigrant brothers were busy in the bazaar doing business, and my Helper brothers with farming, I tried to keep my soul and body together to keep company with God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings'. He also responded to such objections:

> Were it not for the verse, Those who conceal the clear signs and the guidance that We have sent down, after We have shown them clearly in the Book, they shall be cursed by God and the curses. (al-Baqara, 2.159) I would not narrate anything.'

Some claim that other Companions were opposed to Abu Hurayra's narrating Hadith. This is obviously groundless. For many Companions like Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Al-Ansari, Anas ibn Malik and Wasila ibn Aslam narrated from him many Traditions. Some asked Abu Ayyub al-Ansari why he narrated from Abu Hurayra despite his earlier conversion. Abu Ayyub used to answer them: 'He heard from God's Messenger many things that we did not hear.'

Apart from those Companions who narrated Traditions from Abu Hurayra, many leading figures of the first generation following the Companions also received from him numerous Traditions. Among them were Hasan al-Basri, Zayd ibn Aslam, Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, who took Abu Hurayra's daughter in marriage in order to benefit from him more, Sa'id ibn Yasar, Sa'id al-Makburi, Sulayman ibn Yasar, Sha'bi, who received Traditions from five hundred Companions, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, Qasim ibn Muhammad, who is accepted as a link in the chain of the spiritual guides of the Nakshbandi way. Hammam ibn Munabbih and Muhammad ibn Munkadir were the most famous. The number of those who received Traditions from Abu Hurayra amounts to eight hundred.

'Umar appointed Abu Hurayra as a governor to Bahrayn. However, when he made a small amount of wealth by trade during his period of office, 'Umar summoned him from office for investigation. He was found guiltless and 'Umar wanted him to return to his office, but Abu Hurayra declined, saying: 'That is enough for me as a governor'.

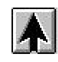


Abu Hurayra was never against 'Ali in favor of the Umayyads

Abu Hurayra, may God be pleased with him, despite claims to the contrary by biased Orientalists such as Goldziher, and their blind followers in the Muslim world like Ahmad Amin, Abu Rayya and 'Ali 'Abd al-Razzaq, was never against 'Ali in favor of the Umayyads. He should have supported 'Ali in the internal conflicts in order that seditions should be crushed but he preferred to remain neutral. He narrated from God's Messenger this hadith: Seditions will appear, during which the one who sits [silent] is better than the one who stands [to participate in them]; the one who stands is better than him who walks [to take part in them], and the one who walks is better than him who runs [in them]. This hadith might not have been related to the internal conflicts during the Caliphate of 'Ali. However, Abu Hurayra was of the opinion that it was related to those conflicts and he joined neither side.

Abu Hurayra was opposed to the government of the Umayyads. He stood in front of Marwan ibn Hakam and narrated to him the hadith: The destruction of my Community will be in the hands of a few callow (young) men from the Quraysh. Marwan responded to him, saying: 'May God's curse be upon them!', pretending not to have understood whom Abu Hurayra meant. However, Abu Hurayra added: 'If you like, I can inform you of their names and characteristics.'

He was frequently heard to pray in public: 'O God, do not make me live until the sixtieth year (of the Hijra).' This supplication of his was so famous among people that whoever saw Abu Hurayra recalled it. He had heard from God's Messenger that some inexperienced, sinful young men would begin to rule the Muslim Umma in the year sixty after the Hijra. Abu Hurayra died in the year of fifty-nine and Yazid succeeded Mu'awiya one year later.



'A'isha, Mother of Believers, was not opposed to Abu Hurayra's narration of Traditions

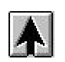
It is futile to try to show that, unlike other Companions, 'A'isha, Mother of Believers, was opposed to Abu Hurayra's narration of the Prophetic Traditions: she was not. Both 'A'isha and Abu Hurayra lived a

long life and, except the following, there is not an incident showing that 'A'isha criticized Abu Hurayra for his narrations. Once, Abu Hurayra was narrating Traditions in the vicinity of 'A'isha's room, while 'A'isha was praying. After the prayer, 'A'isha came out only to find that Abu Hurayra had left. She remarked: 'The Traditions of God's Messenger should not be narrated in this way, one after another', meaning that they should be narrated slowly and distinctly in order that the listeners could understand and memorize them.

Some claim that Imam Abu Hanifa said: 'I do not take the opinions of three Companions as evidence in jurisprudence. Abu Hurayra is one of them'. This is simply a lie told against Abu Hanifa. Allama Ibn Humam, who is one of the greatest jurists of the Hanafi School, regarded Abu Hurayra as a significant jurist. Besides, there is nothing to prove that Abu Hanifa said that.

Abu Hurayra narrated more than five thousand Traditions. When gathered together, they make perhaps a volume one and a half times the length of the Qur'an. There are numerous people who have memorized the Qur'an in six months or even quicker. Abu Hurayra had a very keen memory and spent four years with God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who prayed for the strength of Abu Hurayra's memory. It would be tantamount to accusing Abu Hurayra of deficient intelligence to claim that he could not have memorized around five thousand Traditions. In addition, all of the Traditions he narrated were not directly from God's Messenger himself. As leading Companions like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'A'isha and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari narrated from him, he also received Traditions from them.

While Abu Hurayra was narrating Traditions in the presence of Marwan ibn Hakam, at different times, the latter had them written down by his secretary secretly. Some times later, he asked Abu Hurayra to repeat the Traditions he had already narrated to him. Abu Hurayra began, 'In the name of God, the All- Merciful, the All-Compassionate', and narrated the same Traditions exactly with the same wording. So, those who criticize Abu Hurayra for narrating the Prophetic Traditions should be ashamed and silenced.



'ABDULLAH IBN 'ABBAS, may God be pleased with him

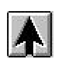
He was born four or five years before the Hijra. He had a keen intelligence and memory, and was an inspired man. God's Messenger prayed for him: O God, make him perceptive and well-versed in the religion and teach him the hidden truths of the Qur'an. In his life, he came to be called, 'The Great Scholar of the Ummah', or 'the Sea', that is, 'One Very Profound in Knowledge', or 'the Translator (Clarifier) of the Qur'an'.

He was a very handsome, tall man endowed with great fluency of speech. His memory was such that he memorized a poem by 'Amr ibn Rabi'a of eighty couplets at one reading. Besides his profound knowledge of Qur'anic interpretation, Tradition and jurisprudence, he was also well-versed in literature, particularly in the poetry of the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance. Ibn Jarir al-Tabari relates, in his Tafsir, either a couplet or verse from him in connection with the interpretation of almost each verse of the Qur'an.

Ibn 'Abbas was greatly loved by the Companions

He was greatly loved by the Companions. Despite his youth, 'Umar included him in his Advisory Council, the other members of which were chosen from the elders among the Companions. When asked why he had included that young man in the council, 'Umar tested the council about their level of understanding of the Qur'an. He asked them about the meaning of the surah al-Nasr: When comes the help of God, and victory, and you see men entering God's religion in throngs, then proclaim the praise

of Your Lord, and seek His forgiveness; for He is Oft-Returning [in grace and mercy]. The elders answered: ‘It orders the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, to praise God and seek His forgiveness when he sees people entering Islam in throngs after the help of God and victory came.’ ‘Umar did not like this and put the same question to Ibn ‘Abbas: ‘What does this sura mean?’ Ibn Abbas replied: ‘This sura implies that the death of God’s Messenger is near. Because, when people enter Islam in throngs, it means that the mission of Messengership has terminated.’ ‘Umar turned to the council and explained: ‘That is why I include him among you.’



Ibn ‘Abbas was very famous for his deep insight, profound learning, keen memory, high intelligence and perceptiveness

Ibn ‘Abbas was very famous for his deep insight, profound learning, keen memory, high intelligence and perceptiveness. Besides, he was very modest. When he entered a place where people gathered, people would stand up in respect for him, but this made him uncomfortable and he asked them: ‘I beg you, for the sake of the help and shelter (you gave to the Prophet and the Emigrants), do not stand up for me!’

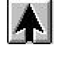
Although he himself was one of the most knowledgeable among the Umma, Ibn Abbas showed great respect to scholars. For example, he helped Zayd ibn Thabit mount his horse by holding the stirrup steady and explained: ‘We have been ordered to behave like this towards our scholars.’ In return, Zayd ibn Thabit kissed his hand without his approval and remarked: ‘We have been ordered to behave like this towards the relatives of God’s Messenger.’

As noted above, Ibn ‘Abbas did not like people to stand up for him to show their respect. However, when he was buried, something occurred that was as if the dead had stood up in respect for him and the spirit beings welcomed him. A voice was heard from beneath the grave:

> O soul at peace! Return unto your Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing! Enter you among My servants! Enter you my Paradise! (al-Fajr, 27.30)

Ibn ‘Abbas brought up many scholars in every branch of religious knowledge. The School of Makka in jurisprudence was founded by him. Leading scholars of the generation following the Companions such as Sa‘id ibn Jubayr, Mujahid ibn Jabr and Ikrima acknowledged: ‘Ibn ‘Abbas taught us whatever we know.’

The number of the Traditions narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas is about sixteen hundred.



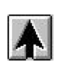
‘ABDULLAH IBN ‘UMAR, may God be pleased with him

‘Umar the second Caliph, had nine sons, among whom only ‘Abdullah is called Ibn ‘Umar (the son of ‘Umar), to mean that ‘Abdullah is one proven to be descended from ‘Umar.

Although ‘Umar is the second in greatness among the Companions, ‘Abdullah may be regarded superior to his father in knowledge, piety, worship and devotion to the Sunna of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Especially his care in following the Prophet’s example was such that, Nafi‘, the tutor of Imam Malik, narrates: ‘While we were descending from the hill of ‘Arafat, Ibn ‘Umar entered a hole. When he came out back, I asked him what he had done in the hole. The Imam answered: ‘While descending from ‘Arafat, I was behind God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and

blessings. He went down into that hole and relieved himself. I felt no need to do that now, but I do not like to oppose him.'165 Also, Ibn 'Umar was never witnessed to drink water in more or less than three swallows because he saw God's Messenger drink it in three swallows.

Ibn 'Umar was born in the early years of Islam. He many times witnessed his father being severely beaten by the Makkan polytheists. When Muslims of Makka emigrated to Madina, he was about ten years old. God's Messenger did not include him in the army which fought at Badr because he was too young. When he was also excluded from the army which fought at Uhud, he returned home in utmost grief and was not able to sleep all night long, saying to himself: 'What sin have I committed that they did not include me in the army fighting in the way of God's Messenger?'



The prayer of Ibn 'Umar

Ibn Khalliqan relates in Wafayat al-A'yan (The Death of the Notables) from Sha'bi:

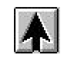
> Once in their youth, 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr, his brother Mus'ab ibn Zubayr, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar were sitting in the vicinity of the Ka'ba. They had the idea that each should pray God for something special in the hope that the prayer would be accepted. Ibn Zubayr prayed: 'O God, for the sake of Your Grandeur, of Your Honor and Majesty, make me a ruler in Hijaz'. His brother Mus'ab stretched out his arms and prayed: 'O God, for the sake of Your Honor and Majesty, of your Grandeur, of Your Throne and Seat, make me a ruler in Iraq.' 'Abd al-Malik held his hands open toward heaven and prayed: 'O God, I ask You to make me a ruler over all the Muslims and secure, through me, the unity of Muslims even though at the cost of some lives'. It was the turn of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar to pray. He prayed: 'O God, I ask You not to take my soul before You guarantee Paradise for me!'

The prayer of the first three was accepted, 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr ruled for some time in Hijaz and was eventually martyred by Hajjaj, the Tyrant, the notorious governor of the Umayyads. His brother Mus'ab likewise ruled in Iraq for a short time. 'Abd al-Malik succeeded his father, Marwan, in Caliphate and was able to secure the unity of Muslims, though at the cost of many lives and much bloodshed.

The martyrdom of Ibn 'Umar

As for the prayer of Ibn 'Umar, Imam Sha'bi remarks: 'Whether the prayer of the Imam was accepted or not will be clear in the Hereafter.' Sha'bi knew something: Ibn 'Umar was never opposed to the descendants of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. Nor did he support the Umayyads. Hajjaj was afraid of him. Once, Hajjaj gave a sermon before the noon prayer. He lengthened the sermon until the time of the prayer had nearly ended. Ibn 'Umar warned him: 'O Governor, time is passing without waiting for you to finish your sermon.'

Hajjaj was full of rancour and enmity against Ibn 'Umar. In the end, during a pilgrimage he got one of his men to injure Ibn 'Umar on the heel with a poisonous spear while he was in pilgrim dress. Ibn 'Umar died because of the poison.



'ABDULLAH IBN MAS'UD AND OTHERS, may God be pleased with them

Another of the Companions who narrated a considerable number of Traditions is 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. He is among the first five or six to embrace Islam.

In his youth, Ibn Mas'ud tended the flocks of the leaders of the Quraysh such as Abu Jahl and 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'ayt. After he converted to Islam, he would no longer be separated from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. He entered the Prophet's house without asking leave to do so and so frequently that those who witnessed it thought he must belong to the Prophet's family.169 As, during military or non-military expeditions, he carried the water bag, wooden sandals and couch of the Prophet, he was called 'the Caretaker of the pattens, couch and water bag'.

Ibn Mas'ud worked some wonders. For example, while he was once being tortured in Makka, he became invisible to the torturers. God's Messenger called him 'the son of the mother of a slave', and advised his Companions: Whoever desires to recite the Qur'an as if it were being revealed for the first time, let him recite it according to the recitation of the son of the mother of a slave.

One day God's Messenger told Ibn Mas'ud to recite to him some Qur'an, Ibn Mas'ud excused himself: 'O Messenger of God, shall I recite it to you while the Qur'an is being revealed to you?' However, the Messenger insisted: I would prefer to hear it from others [than myself recite it]. Ibn Mas'ud began to recite the sura al-Nisa'. He was reciting the verse,

> How then will it be, when We bring forward from every nation a witness, and bring you as a witness against those? (al-Nisa', 4.41),

when God's Messenger, whose eyes were filled with tears, stopped him, saying: Stop, please. This is enough.

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud was short and weak. Once he climbed a tree at the request of God's Messenger for some purpose, and those who were present at the scene laughed at his legs. God's Messenger warned them, saying: Those legs will weigh more than Mount Uhud according to the measure of the Hereafter in the other world.

The Caliph 'Umar sent him to Kufa as a teacher and with a letter in which he wrote to the Kufans: 'O people of Kufa! If I did not prefer you over myself, I would not have sent Ibn Mas'ud to you.' Ibn Mas'ud lived in Kufa during the Caliphate of 'Umar and brought up many scholars. The great scholars of the generation following the Companions such as Alqama ibn Qays, Aswad ibn Yazid al-Naha'i and Ibrahim ibn Yazid al-Naha'i grew up in the ethos established by Ibn Mas'ud. One of the people attending Alqama's courses asked him from whom he had learned all that he was teaching. When Alqama answered, 'I learned from 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali and Ibn Mas'ud', the man responded: 'Good! Good!'

Ibn Mas'ud continued to stay in Kufa during the Caliphate of 'Uthman. However, 'Uthman summoned him to Madina to investigate a groundless complaint about him. Ibn Mas'ud did not want to go back to Kufa. He was very old. One day, a man came to him running, and said: 'Last night I had a dream that God's Messenger was telling you : "They have afflicted you much after me, so come to me!" You answered: 'Right, O Messenger of God! I will not leave Madina any more.' A few days later Ibn Mas'ud became ill. 'Uthman visited him and the following conversation took place between them:

> – Do you have any complaints?
>
> – I have many complaints.
>
> – Of what?
>
> – Of my sins while going to God.

– Is there something you desire?

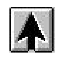
– I desire God's mercy.

– Would you like me to send for a doctor?

– The 'doctor' has made me ill. So, there is nothing the doctor you will send for can do for me.

Ibn Mas'ud spent about twenty years in the company of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. The number of the Traditions he narrated is about 800.

* * *



Besides those four great Companions we have so far given some information about, 'A'isha Siddiqah, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah and Anas ibn Malik may be mentioned as the other Companions who excelled in the number of Traditions they narrated.

'A'ISHA lived with God's Messenger for nine years. She was a woman of great talents, having a keen intelligence and memory and a deep insight and perceptiveness. She had a great curiosity to learn new things and asked God's Messenger for explanation of the matters she could not understand well enough.

ABU SA'ID AL-KHUDRI was among those who lived in the antechamber of the Mosque and was always with God's Messenger. He lived a long life and a time came when he was regarded as the most knowledgeable person of Madina.

JABIR IBN 'ABDULLAH is the son of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Haram al-Ansari, who was martyred in the Battle of Uhud. After the death of God's Messenger, he lived in Madina, Egypt and Damascus. He gave lectures in the Prophet's Mosque in Madina. The leading scholars among the generation succeeding the Companions such as 'Amr ibn Dinar, Mujahid and Ata' ibn Abi Rabah attended his lectures. People gathered around him in Damascus and Egypt and asked him about God's Messenger and his Traditions.

ANAS IBN MALIK served God's Messenger for ten years in Madina. After the Messenger's death, he lived a very long life, during which he must have taught the Prophetic Traditions to those around him.

All the Traditions recorded in Kanz al-'Ummal, including authentic and defectively transmitted ones, number 46,624. It is possible for even a single person to memorize them within a short time. Among the Traditionists of early Islamic ages were many who memorized more than a hundred thousand Traditions, including fabricated ones. So, it is a deception and, at the same time, deceptiveness based on prejudice and evil intent, to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Sunna, claiming that the number of the Traditions narrated from certain Companions is too great for them to have memorized and narrated.



THE BLESSED GENERATION SUCCEEDING THE COMPANIONS

THE BLESSED GENERATION SUCCEEDING THE COMPANIONS

In the many places in it where the Qur'an praises the Companions, it also mentions the blessed generations following in their way. For example:

> The Outstrippers, the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in good-doing, God is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him; and He has prepared for them gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to dwell forever; that is the mighty triumph. (al-Tawba, 9.100)

The blessed generation succeeding the Companions must, first of all, be among those who are praised in the verse together with the Companions; like the Companions, they were well-pleased with God: Whatever came to them from God, whether good or bad, blessing or misfortune, they did not change their attitude. Conscious of their servanthood before God, they worshipped Him in deep respect and reverence. Like the Companions, again, they loved God deeply and put their trust in Him to the utmost degree. God's Messenger praised them, saying: Good tidings for those who have seen me and believed in me, and good tidings for those who see those who saw me!

The Qur'an enjoins respect and good opinion for the preceding generations

The holy generation succeeding the Companions followed in the footsteps of the Companions and showed them due respect. They cherished no rancour and enmity against the believers and wished everyone well. In the words of the Qur'an,

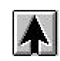
> As for those who came after them, they say: 'Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers, who preceded us in belief, and put not into our hearts any rancour towards those who believe. Our Lord, surely You are the All-Gentle, the All-Compassionate.' (al-Hashr, 59.10)

As described in the surah al-Tawba (9. 100), this blessed generation followed the Companions in good-doing, the Arabic original of which is ihsan. In addition to its meaning explained above, that is, respect, being well-wishing and altruistic, it also means as in the hadith: Good-doing (ihsan) is that you worship God as if you were seeing Him; if, however, you do not actually see Him, surely He sees you. This generation came at a time when Jewish conspiracies and hypocrisy caused great dissentions among the Muslims. At that critical juncture, they protected Islam, defended it, and practised it in deep consciousness and devotion. They became the referents of the Qur'anic verse:

> Our Lord, in You we trust; to You we turn; to You is the homecoming. (al-Mumtahina, 60.4)

Among them were those who performed every night hundreds of rak'a (cycles) of prayer, who would

recite the whole of the Qur'an every two or three days, who always did their obligatory prayers in congregation in a mosque, who, like Masruq, always slept in sajda (prostration) in front of the Ka'ba, and who did not laugh loudly during their whole lives.



Greatness of the blessed generation following the Companions

Uways al-Qarani is generally regarded as the greatest among the holy generation following the Companions. Although he was old enough to have seen the Prophet, he was not in fact able to see him. One day while sitting with his Companions, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, advised them. If you see Uways al-Qarani, ask him to pray for you. 'Umar asked, during his Caliphate, those who came from the Yemen for pilgrimage about Uways. When one year he found him among the pilgrims, he requested him to pray for him. Uncomfortable at being identified, Uways was never seen again among people until he was martyred in the Battle of Siffin on the side of 'Ali, the Caliph.

There were many illustrious persons among this generation, like Masruq ibn al-Ajda', Ata' ibn Abi Rabah, Hasan al-Basri, Muhammad ibn Sirin, 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, Qasim ibn Muhammad and Muhammad ibn Munkadir, who were peerless in knowledge, piety and righteousness. Among them, Muhammad ibn Munkadir was called al-Bakka', the one who cries much. He cried for fear of God so profusely that once his mother said to him: 'O son! If I had not known you since childhood, I would think that you are crying for a sin you committed. Why do you cry so profusely?' Muhammad ibn Munkadir cried because he was deeply conscious of God's Majesty, of the terror of the Day of Judgement and Hell.

He was, again, crying in his death-bed. When asked why, he replied: 'I am afraid I will be included in the meaning of the verse, Yet there will appear to them from God that they never reckoned with (al-Zumar, 39.47).'

Masruq was one of those who worshipped God very earnestly. He used to sleep in prostration before tha Ka'ba. When they suggested him repose in his last illness, he answered: 'I swear by God that if someone appeared and told me that God would not punish me at all, still I would continue to pray him with the same eartnestness as before.' He did so because he was following the lord of mankind, who, when asked why he tired himself so much with praying, answered: Shall I not become a thankful servant?

Sa'id ibn Jubayr was among the students of Ibn 'Abbas. He fought against Hajjaj on the side of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kindi. In daytime he preached Islam, and spent the night praying. When finally he was seized, he was taken to the presence of Hajjaj. On the way, they spent a night in a monastery in a big forest. Sa'id ibn Jubayr wanted to pray to God in the forest. The soldiers let him, thinking that wild animals would tear him to pieces. Sa'id stood in prayer. The soldiers began to watch through the window and saw wild animals gathering in a circle around Sa'id and also watching him.

They tortured him to take the oath of allegiance to Hajjaj, but he refused saying: 'You are in the wrong, wronging the descendants of the Prophet. I will never take the oath of allegiance to you.' Before he was put to death, he recited the verse which we recite during the animal sacrifice:

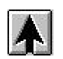
> I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth, a man of pure faith; I am not of those who associate partners with God. (al-An'am, 6.79)

When they turned his face to another direction than the qibla (Masjid al-Haram in Makka), he recited:

> To God belong the East and the West; Wherever you turn, there is the Face of God. (al-Baqara, 2.115)

They struck his neck with a sword and from his lips came out: 'There is no god but God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God'.

It was such persons as Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Muhammad ibn Munkadir, Masruq ibn al-Ajda' and Uways al-Qarani and many others of the same rank, who received the Traditions from the Companions and transmitted them to succeeding generations. Among them, the following few are also worth some fuller mention to recognize that blessed generation more closely:



SA'ID IBN AL-MUSAYYIB

The foremost in Tradition, jurisprudence and the Qur'anic interpretation among the blessed generation succeeding the Companions was Sa'id ibn al-Mussayyib. He was born fifteen years after the Hijra during the Caliphate of 'Umar and had the opportunity to meet most of the Companions including, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali.

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib was a genius in meditation, reflection and memory. He was also famous for his piety, righteousness and profound devotion to God. Everyone accepted him, during his lifetime, as the greatest figure in the field of Tradition.

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib began, as did Hasan al-Basri in Basra, to give opinions and deliver verdicts on legal matters at the early age of around twenty. The Companions admired him greatly. On one occasion, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar remarked: 'If God's Messenger had seen that young man, he would have been very pleased with him.'

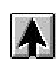
He was extremely careful in performing his daily prayers in congregation in the mosque. 'I have always said the opening takbir (Allahu akbar) of the daily prayers just following the imam (leader of the prayer) for fifty years', he used to say. He never neglected even a single commandment of the Sunna. Once, he was ill and doctors advised him to stay in the valley of 'Aqiq for one month. However, he objected: 'Then, how can I come to the mosque for the prayers of night and dawn?' He was not content to perform the prescribed prayers anywhere except in the Prophet's Mosque.

He did not take the oath of allegiance to the Caliph Walid. Although Hisham, the governor of Madina, had him beaten every day until the stick was broken, he did not yield. When his friends, such as Masruq and Tawus, advised him to give an oral consent to Walid's caliphate in order to be saved from being beaten, he used to answer: 'People follow us in acting. If we consent, how will we be able to explain this to them?'

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib married the daughter of Abu Hurayra in order to be nearer to him and to learn better the Traditions that he narrated. The Caliph 'Abd al-Malik appealed to him marry his daughter (born of his marriage to Abu Hurayra's daughter) to his son, Hisham. Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib refused and, in the face of increasing pressures and threats, he offered her to Ibn Abi Wada', who stayed in the madrasa, the school-building.

Imam Shafi'i took as unquestionably authentic the Traditions that Sa'id ibn al-Mussayyib narrated without mentioning the Companion from whom he received them. This means that, in the view of Imam Shafi'i, Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib was of the same rank as the Companions in knowledge and narration of the Prophetic Traditions. Among those who received Traditions from Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib,

Ata' ibn Abi Rabah, Qatada, Muhammad al-Baqir, a great grandson of Ali's, Zuhri and Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Ansari, are worthy of special mention.



ALQAMA IBN QAYS AL-NAKHA'I

Basra was honored, during the time of the blessed generation succeeding the Companions, by, in particular, Hasan al-Basri, the Yemen by Tawus ibn Qaysan, Madina by Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, and Kufa by Alqama ibn Qays al-Nakha'i.

Kufa was first enlightened by 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud during the Caliphate of 'Umar, and then directly by 'Ali, the fourth Caliph, who transferred the center of the Caliphate there. This gave Alqama a splendid opportunity to meet many Companions to learn the life and Traditions of God's Messenger at first hand.

Alqama is the founder of the School of Kufa in Islamic religious sciences. Those who saw him remembered 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. Alqama followed in the footsteps of Ibn Mas'ud in praying and conduct, in practicing Islam as a whole. 'Amr ibn Shurahbil, who was among the great scholars who narrated Traditions from Alqama, frequently suggested to those near him: 'Come and let us go to the one who resembles Ibn Mas'ud the most in conduct and attitudes.' Ibn Mas'ud represented God's Messenger wholly. As the Messenger desired to listen to Ibn Mas'ud's recitation of the Qur'an, so also Ibn Mas'ud liked to listen to Alqama.

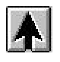
Imam Abu Hanifa, who is generally accepted as the greatest of Muslim jurists, one also famous for his piety and austerity, admired Alqama so much that he used to comment: 'Alqama is probably more profound in [knowledge] of Tradition and jurisprudence than some Companions.'

One day, a man came to Alqama and insulted him very greatly; the illustrious scholar showed no indignation and, after the man had finished his impudence, recited, in reply, the verse:

> Those who hurt believing men and believing women, without their having earned it, have laid upon themselves calumny and manifest sin. (al-Ahzab, 33.58)

The man retorted: 'Are you a believer?' Alqama answered humbly: 'I hope so.'

Alqama struggled with falsehood in his time and did not obey the wrongdoing administrators among the Umayyads. As he himself received Traditions from hundreds of Companions, many leading figures among his own and succeeding generations also narrated from him. Alqama brought up the most illustrious scholars of the Kufan School such as Aswad ibn Yazid al-Nakha'i, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i and Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman, and made Kufa into a propitious ethos for the upbringing of Sufyan al-Thawri, Abu Hanifa and many others.



'URWA IBN ZUBAYR IBN AL-'AWWAM

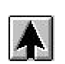
'Urwa was born the son of Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, one of those ten for whom Paradise was promised while alive, and the son of the Prophet's paternal aunt, Safiyya, and his mother was Asma', the daughter of Abu Bakr, and who spent much of her life with 'A'isha, Mother of Believers.

'Urwa can be regarded as a student of 'A'isha, his aunt. He was also taught by Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, who was seven or eight years older than himself.

‘Urwa was one of the seven greatest jurists of his time. Most of the Traditions narrated by ‘A’isha were transmitted by him to succeeding generations. He also received Traditions from ‘Ali, ‘Umar, Ibn ‘Abbas, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari and many other Companions. From ‘Urwa, many illustrious figures of succeeding generations, like Qatada ibn Di‘ama, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Ansari and Zayd ibn Aslam, narrated.

‘Urwa, like his contemporaries, was extremely pious. One of his feet became gangrenous and while it was being amputated with a saw, he made no complaints at all and only the verse, We have encountered weariness from this journey of ours (al-Kahf, 18.62), came out of his mouth. When one of his four sons died some time later, ‘Urwa stretched his arms before the Ka‘ba and glorified God, saying: ‘O God! You gave me four limbs, two arms and two legs, and four sons. You have taken one from both groups and left to me the remaining three. Many thousands of thanks be to You!’

‘Urwa was certainly included in the meaning of the verse, God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him (al-Bayyina, 98.8).



MUHAMMAD IBN MUSLIM IBN SHIHAB AL-ZUHRI

Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri is the one from whom one fourth of the Prophetic Traditions were narrated among the first generation following the Companions. His father, Muslim, had struggled against the Umayyads, particularly against Hajjaj. That is why the Umayyad government usually kept him under surveillance — he did not, as alleged, support the Umayyads.

Like the others who were honoured by God as the most reliable narrators of the Prophetic Traditions, Ibn Shibab al-Zuhri had an extraordinarily keen memory. He memorized the Qur’an before he was seven in only eight days, and he was eighteen years old when he began to do ijtihad, that is, to deliver verdicts on Islamic religious or legal matters, on the basis of principles laid down in the Qur’an and the Sunna of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. There was nothing he would forget after he had learned it: ‘I have betrayed nothing which God put in my heart as a trust’, he used to say.

Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri got his first education from Sa‘id ibn al-Musayyib, who taught him for eight years. He was also taught by ‘Ubayd Allah ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Utba, who was one of the seven leading jurists of the time.

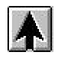
Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri dedicated himself wholly to Hadith. He says: ‘I have shuttled between Hijaz and Damascus for forty years for the sake of Hadith.’

Some accuse Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri of having flattered the Umayyads. This is merely a lie contradicted by historical facts. It is true that he tutored the sons of Caliph Hisham. However, this is not a fault and does not mean that he supported the Umayyads. He should, by contrast, be praised since he tried to guide the future rulers of the Muslim community to truth.

Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri was the son of Muslim ibn Shihab, who supported ‘Abdullah ibn Zubayr who fought against the Umayyads for many years. In his first meeting with Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri , the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik reminded him of this fact. But Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri never feared to speak the truth to the Umayyad rulers. Some of the Umayyads alleged that it is ‘Ali who is referred to in as for him among them who took upon himself the greater part of it, a mighty chastisement awaits him, coming after Those who came with slander are a band of you; do not reckon it evil for you; rather it is good for you. Every man of them shall have the sin that he has earned charged to him (al-Nur, 24.11), which was

revealed on the occasion of the slander against ‘A’isha, Mother of Believers. This was, of course, a great calumny against ‘Ali. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri openly stated in the Umayyad court that the sentence in question refers to ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, the head of the hypocritical band in Madina. When the Caliph frowned at him, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri retorted: ‘May you be left without a father! I swear by God that if a herald were to announce from heaven that God allows lying, I would not lie at all!’

Although Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri defended ‘Ali in the court of the Umayyads against the Caliph, he was first accused of fabricating Traditions in favour of the Umayyads by Ya‘qubi, a Shi‘ite historian, as was Abu Hurayra by another Shi‘ite called Abu Ja‘far al-Iskafi. According to the false account of Ya‘qubi, the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik had Masjid al-Aqsa’ in Quds repaired in order to encourage the Muslims to circumambulate it instead of the Ka‘ba, and asked Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri to fabricate a Tradition to that effect. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri was supposed to have fabricated: It is not worth travelling [for prayer] except to the three mosques: Masjid al-Haram, Masjid al-Aqsa’ and my Masjid here.

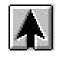


I argued in favour of the authenticity of this hadith earlier in this book. In fact, Ya‘qubi laid himself open to ridicule through such an unreasonable account. No history book whether belonging to the Christians or Jews or the Muslims, has ever recorded that Masjid al-Aqsa’ has been circumambulated as the Ka‘ba is. Second, the Qur’an itself extols Masjid al-Aqsa’ and the Muslims revere it. Therefore, it does not need a fabrication for it to be revered by the Muslims. Third, not only the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, but also the Caliph ‘Umar, Nur al-Din al-Zangi and Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi had it repaired. Fourth, it is impossible that Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri met ‘Abd al-Malik during his reign and fabricated a hadith for him against whom his own father (in the company of ‘Abdullah ibn Zubayr) was fighting. Besides, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri was not famous as a traditionist during the same period, and it was during the Caliphate, and upon the order of, the Caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz that he started the formal compilation of the Traditions. Fifth, ‘Abd al-Malik was not the sort of man to have attempted such an absurd fraud. Before his Caliphate, he was very pious and an authority in Tradition; he was well acquainted with the scholars among his generation. Although he did not succeed, while Caliph, in retaining former reputation among scholars for piety, he cannot have lowered himself so far to make an attempt to fabricate a hadith.

Despite its absurdity, Goldziher, an Orientalist who tried during his whole life to undermine the second source of Islam — the Sunna — took this account of Ya‘qubi as an opportunity to defame Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, who was the first formal compiler of the Traditions and narrated a quarter of them. Modern so-called researchers in the Muslim world, such as Ahmad Amin, ‘Ali Hasan ‘Abd al-Qadir and Abu Rayya, who are, in fact, spokesmen of the Orientalists, have repeated the same. While the science of Hadith, unparalleled in history, is founded on the most secure and sound pillars and whose real sources are there for anyone unprejudiced to study, Goldziher and his followers have based themselves on folkloric and poetical books such as ‘Iqd al-Farid and al-Aghani (Songs) and books on animals like Kitab al-Hayawan, all of which have nothing to do with Hadith and do not have any kind of scientific approach.

Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri is one of the greatest authorities on Hadith. The leading critics of Hadith such as Ibn al-Madini, Ibn Hibban, Abu Khatim, Hafiz al-Dhahabi and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani are all agreed upon his indisputable authority. He received Traditions from many Companions and numerous scholars among the first and second generations after the Companions narrated from him.

Among the blessed generation succeding the Companions are many others worthy of mention, like Aswad ibn Yazid al-Nakha’i, Nafi‘, the teacher of Imam Malik, the founder of the Maliki School of Law, and Tawus ibn Qaysan, who did not sleep for forty years between the night and dawn prayers. However, the scope of this book does not allow me to go into further details.



FURTHER REMARKS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUNNA ACCORDING TO THE QUR'AN AND THE TRADITIONS

God decrees in the Qur'an:

> It is not for any believer, man or woman, when God and His Messenger have decreed a matter, to have the choice in the affair. Whosoever disobeys God and His Messenger has gone astray into manifest error. (al-Ahzab, 33.36)

> ...Those who indeed believe in Our signs, those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel, enjoining on them the good, and forbidding them the evil, making lawful for them the good things and making unlawful for them the corrupt things, and relieving them of their loads, and the fetters that were upon them. Those who believe in him and succour him and help him, and follow the light that has been sent down with him – they are the prosperers. (al-A'raf, 7.156–7)

God's Messenger declares:

> The best of words is the Book of God and the best of ways to follow is the way of Muhammad. The worst of affairs is innovations (against my Sunna). Each innovation is a deviation.

God's Messenger declares:

> Everyone of my Ummah will enter Paradise, except the one who rebels. 'Who is the one who rebels, O Messenger of God?' they asked. He replied: 'Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise; whoever disobeys me means that he rebels.'

God's Messenger declares:

> The like of me in respect of my Ummah is the like of the man who has lighted a fire. Insects and butterflies flock into it. I hold you by the skirts [of your garments to keep you away from the fire] but you pull yourselves into it.

God's Messenger declares:

> Let me not find any of you seated in their armchairs, who when something I ordered or something I forbade is reported to them, respond: 'We have no knowledge of it. So, we follow whatever we find in the Book of God.'

God's Messenger declares:

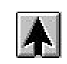
> Take care! Surely I have been given the Book and its like together with it.

God's Messenger declares:

> Those who outlive me will witness many controversies. You must follow my way and the way of the rightly guided successors (Caliphs) who will guide to truth. Hold fast to it and cling to it stubbornly with your teeth. Refrain from newly invented things (in religion). Each thing newly invented in religion is an innovation and each innovation is a deviation.

God's Messenger declares:

> I have left to you two precious things – you will never go astray as long as you hold fast to them – the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet.



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